THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

Roger Pocock

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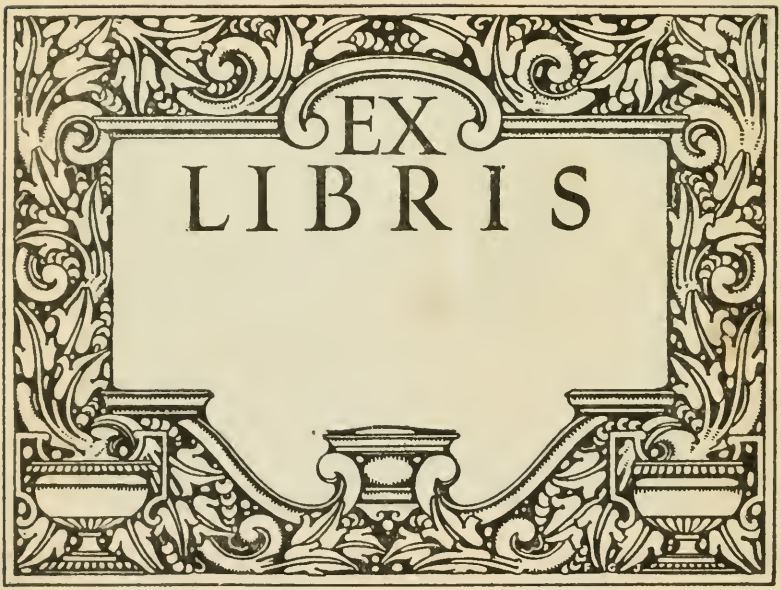

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THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TALES OF WESTERN LIFE

THE RULES OF THE GAME

THE ARCTIC NIGHT, *Chapman & Hall*

THE BLACKGUARD ,, ,,

ROTTENNESS

A FRONTIERSMAN (AUTOBIOGRAPHY) [*Gay & Hancock*

CURLY ,, ,,

SWORD AND DRAGON [*Hodder & Stoughton*

THE FRONTIERSMAN'S POCKET BOOK (EDITED), *John Murray.*

THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

A FANTASY

BY
ROGER POCOCK

LONDON
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1910

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PROLOGUE

LONDON,
December 31st, 2000.

THIS is the story of the World-Storm. Leaders in every field of thought have described the events of the year 1980, but we who have come aged and shaken out of that chaos, know well that the half was not told.

The World-Storm was a human affair, and human events are ever based on love. For the love of woman a man gives all the labour of his life, or in the loss or lack of love will cast his life away. For the love of women men have built cities, or burned them, won thrones or lost them, have staked things present and the things to come. This is the story, then, of a man's love for a woman. And if the life of a man is a love tale, so is the life of a nation, which ends when the people cease to love their country. And so is the life of mankind, which will end when the love of God dies out from the human heart. Life is a plant which has its roots in love.

Reading over many histories of the World-Storm, by divines, by students, and admirals of the air, the whole of which have failed to reach down to the truth: I think that these eminent exact thinkers were mostly dry at the roots. Only a lover can write history.

We set sweet Margaret on the Imperial Throne, we prayed for her, and all the millions of our prayers like subtle spirits wrought upon her soul creating her a queen. We looked again, and behold she was august, inspired, beautiful, terrible—England! Who but a lover could write of such a queen? To me, a plain man who has loved, it is given that I should tell of that transfiguration, and how the lovely child, translated by our prayers moved through the darkness.

Looking back upon those days when frightened and starving, we saw the old order changed, and the Millennium born, I see the persons of the drama, vague, gigantic, fighting in a region of mist and flame to one great end of Peace. Yet I knew all the time that they were human, a woman, and certain men who loved and sinned, who fought and suffered. The evil was burned out of us, the good survives; the scorched and shaken earth is purified.

The Greeks, who were very wise, invented that old myth of Phaeton who dared to drive the chariot of the Sun, but lost his head, and failed, and burned the world.

There is to be no more war, so I doubt if there will be any more progress. Take this heresy if you will, as the maunderings of an old fighter; but have not the ages of suffering been ever the ages of growth? Strength is the child of pain, and in her agony the world gave birth to saints and heroes. The millennial peace will never know the like. Never again will there be such a woman as our Lady the Queen, such men as John Brand, or Lord Sydney.

Their age is memorable, their race illustrious, and for my part, I do not greatly care to live on after them. My work is done, and sitting at my window as I write these last words of my prologue, I see with dim eyes the roofs of London reaching away into the night, the moonlight faint upon her hanging gardens, her palaces and towers, her spires and soaring domes. The bells have been tolling the hours of the dying twentieth century, but now they have broken into one great peal of triumph, they are ringing in the Millennium. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; For mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation."

THE CHARIOT OF THE SUN

I

CHANCELLOR OF THE EMPIRE

"MARGARET, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, Queen, Defender of the Faith, Empress of India."

In the Year of our Lord, 1980, and on the third day of June in that year was Margaret crowned.

Three weeks before the Coronation the sun was setting over St. Michael's woods, and changed the grey walls of Ulster House to luminous orange. A purple bloom of shadow lay on the terrace, but full in the glow from the windows sat the master of the house asleep. The cane chair creaked at times under his weight as he changed dreams. Dressed in the evening costume of the period—claret-coloured broadcloth, and silk stockings, low shoes with garnet buckles, and white ruffles—he was a picture of dignified innocence and stately rest: His Grace, the Duke of Ulster, Chancellor of the federated British Empire, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, full of years, honours, and a good dinner.

Close to him, in the ivy of the wall, a pair of ring-doves cooed and crooned between love and slumber. They were newly wed, and all the world was at rest.

Above the cedars to the eastward a ship rose like a planet, her aeroplanes in red glory against the deeps of heaven. She swept across the south, hovered for an instant, drooped her ethereal wings, and flashed in narrowing circles downward until she fell out of the afterglow and loomed vast in the lower shadows. With feathery lightness she poised on the lawn, her gauze propellers singing themselves to sleep with the whirr of humming-birds. Then from under the gloom of her shadow came a man—a gaunt old man in a grey military cloak—who climbed the steps of the terrace and crossed the gravel space until he came in front of the lighted windows. There the man stood looking down with austere disgust upon the sleeping Chancellor. His ship had risen into the afterglow before the visitor moved a chair and sat down, still intently studying Lord Ulster's face.

Under that prolonged stare, the Chancellor stirred in his sleep, and muttering to himself, awakened, lifting his heavy eyes. In the deepening shadows he saw that silent motionless figure, tried to dispel the impression with a wave of his hand, then found himself broad awake, face to face with Nicholas IV. Emperor of Russia.

At once the Chancellor rose to his feet, and made his royal guest welcome with many a courteous phrase. He offered apology that his servants were all at a church concert this Sunday evening, and that neither himself nor his son had been at hand to receive the Imperial yacht with proper honours.

He offered hospitality, invited his Imperial Majesty to enter the house.

His words disappeared into the air, slow cold eyes followed his every movement, and the Emperor waited in freezing silence. Motionless, chilled, shocked, dismayed, the Chancellor stayed his speech.

" Your Grace will understand," said the Emperor, " that I do not come as a friend."

Germany and France had been gathering armaments, relations were strained to the breaking point, war might be declared at any moment, the allies were only held from attack by the ominous silence of Russia. Then Ulster had won the Emperor to his side, and an alliance was now in treaty between the Russian and the British Empires which would make the threatened war impossible. It was in the moment of the Chancellor's triumph that Nicholas IV. came to his house an enemy.

" For your own sake," said the Emperor, coldly, " you'd better see that we are not overheard."

Ulster seized this chance of covering his confusion, entered the house, surveyed the empty study and returned, saying again that his household were all at the church. The Emperor had taken one of the garden chairs, his back to the windows, and thoughtfully looked out upon the garden, his long lean fingers tapping a cigarette. By a gesture he told the Chancellor to sit down.

" There is," he began in his purring, sibilant English, " a young Indian prince now resident in England."

The Chancellor had been racking his brain to find the meaning of the Emperor's coldness. His head

was lowered in thought, but now he glanced up sideways under his heavy brows.

"Lots of them," said he.

"I speak," said the Emperor, "of the Maharajah of Haidar."

"I remember, sir," answered Ulster, thoughtfully. "He is serving in Her Majesty's Bodyguard."

"Exactly," said the Emperor in a tone which forbade further comment. "This young prince is descended, your Grace, from the ancient royal line of the Moguls. On his elevation to the throne of Haidar, he was recognized by the Moslem as a sacred personage. He demanded of the Indian Government the restoration of the ancient Peacock Throne, which had been taken from his ancestors by the Persians, and later secured by the British from the Persian Treasury. He demanded also the right of a royal salute, claimed to be addressed as a Royal Highness, and asked for certain privileges of maintaining armed forces within his kingdom of Haidar. All these demands were granted."

"Sir," the Chancellor spoke satirically, "these statements are of the profoundest interest."

"They are," said the Emperor. "The concessions granted to this prince actually endangered the British supremacy in India. The restoration of the Peacock Throne met with violent protests both from the loyal princes and from the English press. When this throne was brought to Haidar, its arrival was attended by portents, so-called miracles, a ferment in the bazaars, riots in many cities, and at last a revolt in the North West Provinces. Of course revolt was crushed.

" The presence of Prince Ali, perfectly loyal as he was throughout, became so dangerous that he was hurried out of India, and gradually the country settled down. But the memory remained of gallant English officers who were slaughtered, mutilated, of innocent children dashed against stone walls, of women who were—we will pass that by. Whoever gave orders for the granting of Prince Ali's claims was guilty of all that, the massacres, and the vengeance. The man who had to face the rage of England then, might have envied Judas Iscariot. The Viceroy of India claimed to have received orders from the India Office in London. Then the Secretary of State for India proved that he had issued no such orders. So the Viceroy shot himself. Your Grace was at that time Secretary for India."

A bluish pallor had overspread Lord Ulster's face, and he answered nothing.

It was then that the Marquess of Sydney, the Chancellor's only son, returned from the church. Entering the house from the north, and making no sound upon the carpets, he passed through a curtained doorway into the study. In the afternoon he had been writing a letter at the desk set between the middle windows, and now, returning to finish it, he was glad to find the room unoccupied. He sat down, took the letter from his blotting-pad, and considered what he had written.

Then he heard the striking of a match outside on the terrace, and the sound of his father's voice. Lord Sydney was slightly annoyed, uncertain for the moment whether to take his writing elsewhere. Some neighbour, old Pollock probably, had dropped

in to talk politics and would stay as usual for supper. His father was still speaking in low, even tones, not likely to disturb him. Lord Sydney became absorbed in his letter. It is curious to note that pens and matches were still in those days used by old-fashioned people.

Outside, the Emperor, striking a match, and lighting his cigarette, heard the Chancellor patiently.

"Yes," he said, "I understand, of course. Your Grace was, comparatively speaking, a poor man, and could not as such aspire to the Chancellorship. A legitimate ambition thwarted by want of means, a career in jeopardy—yes, I understand. As to Prince Ali's demands they seemed quite innocent—a diamond throne, a royal salute, a few such trifles. He offered you two millions sterling if the Viceroy could be moved to grant his claims. The Viceroy was moved, had no writings to show in defence—and shot himself. The claims were granted, and babies were dashed against stone walls. His Grace of Ulster, with two millions of money, rose to the Chancellorship. It might be awkward for my Lord Duke if these facts became generally known."

The Chancellor gripped the arms of his chair, and leaning forward laughed in his throat.

"Your Majesty," he answered hoarsely, "has acted with rare prudence. I am grateful for the opportunity of dealing with this disgraceful slander, which might otherwise have endangered our relations with your Imperial Majesty's Government. The fabrications of some secret service agent——"

"Enough, my Lord; the agent in question was my agent, the money with which Prince Ali bought

you was my money, and here," the Emperor produced from under his cloak the famous Russian papers, " I hold the written transactions."

" Am I a child, sir," cried Ulster, testily, " to be frightened with bogies ? "

Nicholas opened the papers and bent forward that the Chancellor might see them.

" Is that enough," he asked, " or do you want to see more ? Look," he turned the papers slowly page by page, " at this, and this, and this ! "

" Forgeries," answered the other boldly, " forgeries all. How could your Majesty be so deceived ? "

Nicholas with a smile turned to the last page, " and this ? "

The Chancellor's eyes seemed starting from his head, his jaw dropped, a moan broke from his throat ; then with a sharp effort he drew himself together, and pointed at the papers.

" That—that— " he gasped, " that accuses me, much more it accuses you. That you, an Emperor, set such a trap is a disgrace crying aloud to Europe, that—that your Majesty is unfitted for a throne. I dare you, I challenge you. Publish those papers, and not an ambassador would remain at the Russian capital ! "

" That I set the trap ? " Hot fury darkened the Russian's face, " This scullion work is not in the hands of kings. Would you make *me* your partner ? "

" Sir," Ulster instantly shot out his arm, extended upwards over the papers. " Look ! The yacht has signalled ! "

The Emperor folded the papers, and jammed them back into the breast of his cloak.

"Let her signal," he answered; "I am not your partner, neither am I your dupe."

"Take the two millions," cried Ulster, "and give me these papers."

"I do not bargain with your Grace," answered Nicholas.

"What do you want me to do? I'll resign the Chancellorship, retire, anything!"

"And cheat me of what I bought?"

"If you expose me, you take my life."

"I have taken it, and paid for it such as it is."

"You can't force me to live! I repeat, to live!"

"As you please. If you die, these papers shall be published as a memorial volume. If you disobey me, they shall be published. If you attempt to cheat me, they shall be published. You have sold yourself to me, and I claim you."

Ulster shrank back into his chair, covering his face, and for some time remained in silence. At last in despair he muttered into his breast—

"What are the terms?"

"I will give you back these papers when you have earned them. You shall live on, Chancellor of the British Empire, honoured, reverenced. When you die a state funeral will attend you to the grave, and another truly British monument will disfigure that poor old Abbey."

Ulster cast about for a weapon, and the Emperor, divining this, chuckled.

"Under my cloak," he said, "I've got an automatic, over your house my yacht. You need

have no fear. Indeed, I know the limitations of your power as Chancellor, and shall not press too hard. Now as to terms: I permit you, my Lord Duke, to save your country from the Franco-German invasion. But you will complete the Anglo-Russian Treaty on the terms proposed by my ambassador."

"My colleagues would never consent," cried Ulster, "I should be thrown out of office."

"Tell your colleagues that unless the treaty is signed, Russia will join the Franco-German alliance. My share is India. They will consent.

"Secondly, your Grace, I have to tell you that my brother the Grand Duke Alexander Alexandrovitch was lately slighted by the young Queen. She shall marry him."

"Sir, she would die first!"

"She shall marry him, and your Government shall make the offer of her hand.

"Thirdly, my Lord Duke, I will be secured from any future treachery. You will personally entrust me with the Formula of the Fleets."

When England's great enemy demanded the Formula of the Fleets, Ulster's brain refused to receive his meaning. The naval airship of the period carried no stored force, but the power driving her engines was flashed to her through space from the nearest fortified station of the Admiralty. Each station gave its ships a power-field extending two thousand miles in all directions. Thus the Home station was a fortified position in the coal measures of Staffordshire. Groups of stations covered Canada, the West Indies, and South America; South Africa was in the power-field of the Victoria Falls, Central

Africa was controlled from the White Nile, West Africa from the Niger Valley. Another chain of power-fields centred in the Ocean Fortresses: Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Aden, Colombo, Rangoon, Singapore, Hong Kong. From the Arctic regions to the Antarctic ice, no corner of the world was secured from the visitation of our fleets. To debar foreign navies from using our stores of power, each ship had her engines keyed to an exact adjustment known as the Formula of the Fleets. Given that formula, a foreign ship could traverse the whole planet. The British Empire and the United States used one formula, entrusted only to the Chancellor, the President, and the Adjusters-General, and one can readily understand that this key of space conferred most awful powers.

And were the formula changed without due warning, every ship afloat would be plunged through space to destruction.

"The Formula of the Fleets," Ulster repeated vaguely. "You!" Then he seemed to awake. "You devil!" he cried furiously. "No!"

He choked, he could find no utterance, but wrung his hands, and, starting to his feet, shook his arms upward at the heavens. Then he saw the Emperor's cold face between the lamplight and the moonlight smiling, and at the sight drew back. A strangled sob broke from him. "I am trapped, shamed, broken; I have sinned, but still I am an Englishman, and all my years are given to England's service!"

The Chancellor had back his dignity and a new courage.

"The claims of the Russian ambassador insult this nation; the proposals of that drunken and disgusting beast, your brother, insult my sovereign; the demand for the Formula of the Fleets is a deadly insult to myself. You have forfeited all claims to treatment as a sovereign; but such claims as you have presumed to make to me, I shall lay before my colleagues, before the Empire, and before the world. As to your charges against me, they come not from a friendly prince, but from an enemy too base even for the courtesies of war. Our people will not see the sin of the Chancellor in this crime of Russia."

The Emperor's cruel eyes glittered, the moonlight caught a gleam from his teeth.

"Most noble patriot," he answered softly, "most courteous statesman, no doubt the English can be gulled into a belief that the Russian Emperor came secretly and at night, and behaved in an unseemly and ridiculous manner. They would even believe that I danced on your terrace by moonlight. Proof would at once appear that I never left my house at Pera, and the mad Chancellor would become the laughing-stock of Europe. Consider the cartoons!"

Ulster sank back into his chair, and his face writhed, for the most heroic are unarmed against ridicule.

"Moreover," the Emperor smiled, "already a copy of the documents I have shown you has been placed by an Englishman in the hands of the editor of the *Times*—sealed, and awaiting my orders. In these papers there is no reference to Russia, only to certain transactions between Prince Ali and his Grace the Duke of Ulster. Russia does not appear

in such affairs of bribery, fraud, and betrayal. After the Chancellor's disgrace, and shameful end, the Germans and the French will make declaration of war, will be joined by Russia, and this country swept from the map of Europe which it has marred too long. The British Empire will be divided among the allies. I have offered to give you back your life, and the immortal fame of saving your country. Refuse, and I give you to shame and death, the British Empire to destruction. Of course, if you want my mercy, you will apologize first for insulting me." The Emperor stood up and waved his hand. " I have called my yacht," he said not unkindly. " I give you this minute to surrender."

Far up in the heavens a white light flashed like a star, and from the great spaces of the night, a shadow swooped down, winged, swift, instantly growing gigantic against the moon, then gleaming in her rays. The Chancellor watched spellbound, and as he watched the terror seized his brain, the doom of a great Empire, condemned to this death, abandoned by God.

Then the agony of a broken man rang out in one great cry, " I have surrendered ! " and the echoes of walls and trees heard him, and answered.

II

THE MASTER OF LYONESSE

When on the terrace of Ulster House, Nicholas of Russia dealt heavily with the Chancellor to his ruin, one witness was so placed that he heard all. The witness was the Duke of Ulster's son, James, Marquess of Sydney. It is a very pleasant thing to hold this gentleman in memory, to think of him as he was in life, and at that time in the thirtieth year of his age. He was a tall man, nervous rather than strong, his face very fair and comely. In habit he was lean, bronzed with the sun; in bearing most knightly and courteous; in manner a little cynical with a grave humour. But that tells nothing of the quality in his eyes, and in his smile, which made one love and trust him. None of the pictures or statues to his memory do justice to that wonderful quality of the man, nor can a written word call back the charm.

It was on the 11th day of May, 1980, that he heard the passages between the Emperor and his father. It was on Friday, the 30th, four days before the Coronation, that he moved. There were railways in those old-fashioned times, lines of a single rail. Catching the 9 a.m. express from Paddington, Lord Sydney reached the Land's End district by noon, and alighted at Lyonesse.

This was his first visit to the etheric city, and as he left the terminus to enter Brand Street, he was astonished at the grandeur of the place. Thanks to the mildness of the Cornish climate, palms and acacias sheltered the pavement. Down the long vistas of sub-tropic trees there were fountains spraying white splendour into the sunlight, and statues of golden bronze lurked in the shadows. The street was lined with shops and theatres, traffic throbbed upon the causeway, the pavements were thronged with people. The town, even in 1980, was large, its population numbering half a million, a grey granite city walled about on three sides by the sea cliffs. The streets were filled with a tumult of affairs, but where they converged upon St. Buryan Square, there was a resting-place of lawns and trees shadowed by groups of buildings. Upon the western frontage of the square, stood a rough-hewn palace some acres in extent, the office of John Brand III.

Homely and plain was the master's room in that palace. The threadbare carpet, the shabby furniture, the queer old plans and pictures on the walls were relics passed down from another age. In that chair an American of the nineteenth century had dreamed, from the books of that case had learned, at that table planned—and the result was Lyonesse. The relics spoke of poverty, of research, of noble patience, and the founder's grandson kept these things as a reminder.

The American sat at his desk, and one might have known him for Lyonesse, so mighty his physical strength, so shabby and neglected his dress, so steady his labour. They say he was a hard man at

that time, rugged, avaricious, rather feared than liked.

A sealed envelope was brought to him, with explanation that a man had called who would not be denied and had given trouble. Brand opened the cover and within found a visiting card.

"Trooper the Marquess of Sydney,
Her Majesty's Bodyguard."

His face brightened as he read; gladly he sent a welcome to his visitor, gave orders that he was not to be disturbed, and in the interim of waiting set all his work aside.

He rose at Lord Sydney's entrance. "Well, old fellow," he spoke heartily, as they shook hands, "is it ten years?"

"Fourteen since our last fight at school. I'm awfully glad to see you, Brand."

"You've forgotten the black eyes I gave you?"

"I'd be sorry to fight again; you're much too strong. But your nose, Brand, you must remember my sign manual, and I was so proud of that nose."

Brand stroked his blunt nose thoughtfully, "Most tender memory!"

Lord Sydney smiled, and as the other led him to a seat—

"We promised to write to each other."

"We were very young," Brand chuckled. "So you went soldiering, I to my trade."

"Each to his tribe, and God for all," said Sydney. "I used to envy you."

"I wanted to be a soldier," answered Brand.

" But, Sydney, why all this secrecy ; why put your card in a sealed envelope ? "

The soldier's face turned grave. " I have good reason. These walls," he looked anxiously about him, " have they ears ? "

" Sydney, this isn't London."

" May I look round ? "

Brand laughed, but his visitor walked to the door and opened it suddenly, making a rapid survey of the ante-room. Other doors he examined which led to the safe, and to Brand's private chambers ; then considering the walls and hangings, returned to his place.

" I should have been followed from London," he explained, " but I hired an actor to personate me, and he is leading a fine chase of spies to Stamboul."

" Who has you watched ? "

" My father, and when he knows I've been here you'll catch the infection. I warn you, Brand."

" My dear fellow, your father—— "

The Guardsman's eyes flashed ominously, his jaws hardened.

" What do you know of my father ? "

" Chancellor of the Empire, his Grace the Duke of Ulster, K.G., and a lot more twaddle."

" By the Almanac, yes, and head of the Gold Party which sits up to hate you all night. Come, speak out ! "

" My dear fellow, I never met your father. In politics I like fighting him, and I think he likes fighting me. He would never speak evil of me as a private man."

" Or you of Ulster ? Well, I can't blame your

courtesy, Brand, I don't understand your politics. They say that you finance the Labour Party. You've been accused of Socialism."

Brand chuckled. "Have you heard about my eating babies?"

"Even a cannibal might love his country. Brand, I'm in horrible trouble, and I've come to you for help."

"You've come to me for help. Go on, old chap."

"In politics you can accuse a man without any feeling of hatred?"

"I would not have him butchered."

"Not even if your opponent granted the Peacock Throne to Ali of Haidar?"

Brand's face flashed with anger. "My friend, spare me all mention of that," he said. "Is it a kind thing, Lord Sydney, to tear the old wound open?"

"Does it hurt me less? I'd go on if it killed both of us, and you shall listen."

"Perhaps you don't know," answered Brand, "that my young brother saw his wife crucified, before the rebels gouged out his eyes and burned him."

"Would you treat the man as a mere political opponent who granted the Peacock Throne to Ali of Haidar?"

"The Viceroy died by his own hand. He is beyond our vengeance."

"Vengeance?" cried Sydney, "my words bite deep. Is vengeance in your code of political courtesy? I tell you the man who granted Prince Ali's claims is still alive, within the reach of vengeance. He drove the Viceroy to suicide, and thought that

under heaven there was no witness left to rise against him."

"That is beyond belief; there are limits even to treachery."

"Are there such limits? The man who granted Prince Ali's claims received not thirty pieces of silver, but two million pounds. He lives."

Brand turned away his face.

"Prince Ali was an agent, Brand, an agent of Russia, and the bribe of two million pounds was Russian money. The man who received that price of blood has not hanged himself, neither were his eyes gouged out, nor was he burned like your brother. He bought with it the Chancellorship of the British Empire. He is my father."

Brand's iron-hard face was sterner than ever now. "Have you gone mad?" he asked.

"Prove me insane or dreaming, or bewitched. Prove my father an honest man, and England safe. It would be all right then, Brand. Do you think it is a little thing to tell; that it is easily said? I, Ulster's son, that was a gentleman, am now a spy. His shame has tainted me, and so the leprosy will spread from generation to generation. I suppose," he added, "you think I'm hysterical."

Leaning forward, Brand laid his hand upon Lord Sydney's shoulder.

"There's some mistake," he said.

"I tell you that my father, Ulster, is sold to Russia. He has forced upon the Government a degrading treaty."

Brand was silent. "He has given our Lady, the Queen, to that drunken beast Alexander."

Brand was silent.

"He has divulged the Formula of the Fleets!"

"Sydney!" Brand rose overthrowing his chair, then withholding himself by main force, sat heavily upon the desk. "Go on," he said hoarsely, "these statements need to be proved."

"Time enough for that," Lord Sydney flung himself beside Brand's knees upon the desk, and buried his face in his arms. "I've lived in a dream world," he said in bitterness, "a world which I built for myself, where one's father could be respected, one's mother honoured. All things were as they should be; one could play the game——" He looked up, and his eyes were reddened. "I was a boy in that fool's paradise—but now, ah, well," he threw his head back, looking out at Brand with half-closed eyes, "I suppose I've got to be a man." Then he told Brand of the Emperor's visit to Lord Ulster, and how he had overheard what passed between them.

"Have you proof?" asked the American.

"I realized," said Sydney, "that I must have proof. I watched my father's face from day to day, and when he returned to town, I went with him. For once he was glad of my company, while with treason upon treason he bought the papers which Russia held against him. By his face I knew when the Government consented to the Treaty, when they agreed to the Russian marriage, when he betrayed the Formula. He had earned the papers then. I don't think he ever slept until last night, until he had paid the price. I was alone with him last night when the Emperor's messenger came. We had

finished dinner, the long, dull dinner, the servants cleared out, and Ulster had his wine. The messenger was shown in, bearing a despatch box, and I did the honours, while Ulster unlocked the thing. I saw him take out a sealed package and a letter which he tried to conceal from me. The messenger drank our health, and Ulster escorted him to the door. I had time to slip a drug into Ulster's wine.

" Yes, he slept almost before he had read the Emperor's letter. It was a queer letter. Once a month hereafter His Grace would receive a messenger and to him display this package with unbroken seals —on pain of instant vengeance. A little of that treatment would tame any Chancellor. The sense of being watched, the horror lest the package miscarry, the fear ever with him, the curse that must be borne in silence year by year, then death and exposure. It would have driven him stark staring mad ! I have relieved my father of that curse, his spies are chasing me to Constantinople. Here is the package—the proof of what I have said, and you shall break the seals."

Brand opened the Russian papers, the transactions between Ulster and Prince Ali, which page by page he examined. He filled a briar pipe, lighted, and smoked it through before he spoke.

" I think," he said at last, " that this is a strong chain of evidence, but only in converging evidence is there proof. There is ground here for a charge against the Duke, not for his conviction ; and all his friends would rally to his defence, making him stronger than ever. The value of these papers is his evident fear. Now as to the secret treaty."

Lord Sydney produced the Draft, which the master read.

"There is ground here for an attack upon the Government. And as to the Formula?"

"Only my word," answered Sydney. "You doubt my word!"

"Not I. But imagine this case tried by the House of Lords, the judges being Ulster's friends with the fear of their own downfall if they failed him."

Lord Sydney rose distracted and paced the floor, unnerved, broken.

"And you are going to fail me?" he cried.

"Easy, boy, easy," said Brand, relighting his pipe, "that kind of play never scored at school. The games must be played more soberly to be won."

"Don't preach at me, Brand," said the other roughly. "Ah, forgive me! If you only knew—you've never seen her, have you? But if you saw the Queen, you would understand, for she is brave as a lion, stainless as the lilies, her voice makes us mad with love; yet she is our Lady, and we scarcely dare to look her in the face. And she is to be sold to infamy! Oh, God, what can I do, what can I do to save her?"

"Lord Sydney, you forget yourself."

My lord looked at him, his eyes narrowing, his mouth hardened, his whole face freezing with self-suppression.

"Yes, that is so, Mr. Brand. Back to the facts then," he laughed nervously, "we have to fight the Chancellor, we have to fight the Government. Then there is Russia to fight, and Europe."

Brand went to the window, and there stood looking out. Beyond the pavement and the trees rose all that city which his fathers and himself had built upon the storm-swept moors of a wild headland, his walls the cliffs, his moat the Atlantic ; and this bastion of our island stronghold was not unworthy to guard the British Realm.

Until that day we knew of Lyonesse as a strong man, and an humble, so we thought ; for in the twelve years since he came to power, the hard-hitting, rough-fighting master of industry had never lost his habit of grave self-command, or let any breath of passion sway his justice. A man must be true to win the confidence of friends, but great to win the trust of enemies.

Now the deeps were moved, and elemental forces stirred within him. Henceforward he was to suffer, to rejoice, to pity, to slay within no boundaries of self-discipline, to love with irresistible passion, to strike with overwhelming rage. One does not praise or blame the hurricane.

Brand came back to the desk, sat down in his chair, and laid his hand upon the Russian papers.

" One would think," he said, " that the man who owned these papers, owned this Chancellor. He obeyed Russia—will he fight me ? "

" There is the whole party of the capitalists," answered the other ruefully, at which Brand was aroused.

" Will they fight me ? " he said.

" But the allies will declare war ! "

" Am I not Lyonesse ! "

" You cannot fight three nations."

"My father warned me," said Brand, thoughtfully, "and somehow I always knew that sooner or later I must take the field to save Britain. No man has seen etheric power in action."

Sydney breathed hard. "You called it once the Chariot of the Sun."

"The Chariot of the Sun. Yes. Heaven send I may never have to use etheric power for war."

III

OUR LADY THE QUEEN

In the wondrous romance of our Island history the reigns of three English Queens stand out with singular splendour. First came Elizabeth the Great, then Victoria the Good, and now in the fulness of time reigns Margaret the Fair.

At the end of his long reign the old King built on the site of Buckingham House, a great white palace for Margaret. Above the marble walls terrace upon terrace the hanging gardens bloomed, and tier on tier of gleaming colonnades ; then pearl-white domes broke the long lines above, and gemmed pavilions flanked the central towers. Not that Margaret cared for palaces. Her mind ran upon fighting, and she showed the old King books about the Varangian Guard of Greek Byzantium, the Grand Musketeers of Muscovy, the Mousquetaires of France. For her sake he took liberties with the Ancient and Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms, a nice piece of antique frippery which he changed into a standing regiment generally to be known as the Queen's Blackguards. This force he quartered in the palace and made it a very good nursery to train young officers for the Imperial Army.

To enlist, a lad must undergo the severest tests of mind and body, then pass the school of arms. Then the Queen granted to him chain mail and helmet of silver, a black cloak charged with the royal arms, the sword and the spurs. For officers the armour was of gold, the cloak scarlet; for undress, a suit of woven gold or silver. Quarters were given in the palace, but the trooper must provide his own sustenance, and for his servant a trained man who rode in the rear rank of his squadron. The discipline was rigid, and what with training for the Imperial army, there was little time for mischief. They were the last cavalry of the civilized world.

Such were the Queen's toys, palace and guard, beyond all jurisdiction save her will.

The Plutocracy ruled, the Imperial court only remained in the realm on sufferance as a venerable fiction, and nobody ever dreamed that Margaret's playthings, accepted by the nation as a joke, were destined to prove a most momentous fact. For the present it was pretty to see the fair maid, ruddy, sunburnt, wilful, playing with her glittering pageantry of state in the white palace. So the rose of England bloomed in a garden of swords, and on the eve of the Coronation no little cloud had risen as yet in warning. Looking back through a score of years it seems a wonder passing belief that June, 1980, dawned with a cloudless heaven, and the earth at peace.

One glance at the calendar brings it all to mind. Only last Friday Sharon won the Derby, Jim Carrington up, wearing Tom of Lancaster's colours—rose red, and how the people cheered the

young prince afterwards! On Saturday Her Majesty was at the Colosseum to close the Pan-Anglican games, and with her own hands crowned the victors with wreaths. The Maharajah of Gwalior gave a Nautch at his palace in Kensington. On Sunday the great Dignitaries assembled in town for the Coronation, attended a special service at St. Paul's. On the 2nd of June, Monday morning, the *Gigantic* arrived—one of Mr. Brand's etheric liners—with a contingent from the army of the United States in honour of the Coronation.

Word came in the afternoon that Mr. Partridge with his yacht *Meteor* had won the America Cup at St. Louis. This evening was set for the Masquerade at Devonshire House, and there was to be a torch-light procession of the City Liveries. As to the palace, that was mostly concerned on Coronation eve with matters of apparel, the burnishing of jewels, nervous rehearsals, and feverish attempts at repose.

In the portico, three saddled horses, overcome with heat, mouthed their chained bits, and swished their lazy tails. In the guardroom, midway upon the alabaster stairs, three gentlemen of the guard, Queen's orderlies in waiting, tried not to fall asleep. They had taken off their casques with the lions, but still that ridiculous chain mail was suffocating. They yawned for want of better occupation, talked to keep themselves in a state of decent wakefulness.

"Ho-la," said MacNeill, rolling over in his chair, "I'll grill my other side now. By the bars of Hades I'd be cooler at home." MacNeill was half Spaniard, a banker's son from Venezuela. "Ali," he turned to the Indian prince who lounged by the wall, "you

know all about this business to-morrow. What's it like ? "

Lazily the Prince lifted his eyes—big, soft, gentle eyes they were.

" My dear MacNeill, what business ? "

" Why the Coronation, of course ; weren't you crowned when they made you King of Haidar ? "

The Prince laughed easily. " It wasn't a crown, we have a green umbrella."

" The ancestral gamp," said MacNeill, irreverently. " Is Haidar so wet ? What do they worship—ducks ? "

" Allah, el Allah ! "

The Prince scarcely breathed the awful name, and his eyes were hard now.

MacNeill apologized with much politeness, and asked if the State Umbrella was old.

" Very old." Prince Ali smiled.

" Holy ? "

" As my Faith."

" Won't keep out the wet ? "

Still smiling, the Prince drew off his gauntlet, and swept it softly across MacNeill's face.

So long Lord Sydney had watched Prince Ali in silence, now he came forward, and, with a little bow, laid claim to the gauntlet.

" Your Highness," he said respectfully, " as a reigning sovereign cannot fight this cad, or he would never have dared to insult you. You," he said, turning upon MacNeill, " will apologize to the Maharajah or I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

" I didn't insult him," growled the offender, sulkily. " I don't understand what you're driving at."

"My dear Prince," Lord Sydney turned his back upon MacNeill. "He would not understand more if I thrashed him."

"You're quite right, Sydney," Prince Ali accepted the return of his gauntlet. "I have so few friends that one more," he clasped Lord Sydney's hand, "has the larger place in a full heart. I shall remember."

Just then an Equerry came down the stairway, and gave to MacNeill a letter from her Majesty to be despatched. The trooper, muttering wrathfully, set on his helmet, took up his gloves and sword, and swaggered away down the stairs. Without, they heard his horse dancing with excitement, break off at a canter into the distance. Sydney and the Prince laughed together.

"Maharajah," my Lord Sydney laid his hands very tenderly upon Ali's shoulders. "Do you believe that I am your friend?"

"Surely you have proved it more than once."

"Will you promise me not to be offended if I ask a still more personal question than even MacNeill dared?"

The beautiful dark eyes glowed. "Go on, my dear Sydney."

"What if I hurt, Maharajah? Your heart has changed to us since you came to England; you know now that we are not all brutes. You know that some of us, unbelievers, are not to be bought?"

"What do you mean?" An ominous flush burned in Prince Ali's face.

"When you bought my father with two million pounds, did you know where the money came from?"

Under the dark skin came pallor, and concentrated rage leaped to Prince Ali's eyes, as he recoiled.

" Understand this, my lord," said the Maharajah of Haidar. " One cannot hate an enemy from the very heart unless he has been a friend. Withdraw that question ; I give you the chance to withdraw. To no other man living would I allow so much."

" I must repeat my question, Maharajah."

" I'll have your life for this ! "

" And afterwards ? How could you possibly remain in the household ? Come, deny the charge, Prince, and let me beg your pardon."

" By Azrael—— "

" Don't swear at me. I give you a week to leave Her Majesty's service."

A young man, a civilian, was coming up the stairway, a big boy with blue eyes and freckles, who carried a letter in his hand. Lord Sydney turned to him as he reached the stairhead.

" Can I serve you ? " asked the guardsman, courteously.

The boy drew nearer. " If you please," he said nervously, " this letter is for the Adjutant."

" A rookie ? "

" My name is Browne, sir, and I—— "

" Fresh from the incubator ? "

" I've passed," said the boy in shy triumph, " but the Adjutant ? "

" I think the Adjutant is out on the tiles. Let me introduce you ; Mr. Browne, Trooper Ali."

Prince Ali bowed stiffly and walked away.

" Won't you sit down ? " Lord Sydney offered a chair.

The boy sat down, and Sydney joining him, he produced a cigarette case.

The trooper appeared to be shocked. "Put it away," he whispered. "We don't smoke—bad for a man in training."

From a syphon on the table beside him he filled a glass with sparkling water, a delicately flavoured draught, which the boy accepted wondering.

"Don't you drink wine or—— "

"Never breathe the word! We must keep in condition, with the Tournament due next month, or the Tommies will carry off half our trophies. What games do you play, Mr. Browne? We want new blood badly, especially in the cricket field. I'm captain of the first eleven."

"I don't play, though."

"Are you a decent aerial yachtsman? "

"I'm a savage," cried the boy humbly, but Sydney had set him quite at ease.

"A savage? "

"I'm from the province of Yukon."

"Where on earth is that? "

"In arctic Canada. My old man has cattle."

"In the Arctic? "

"Yes, a six months' day, and a six months' night. I tell you it's an awful thing for a cowpuncher to face you fellows."

"A what? "

"Cowboy."

"But I thought that cowboys and dodos and mammoths and all those things were extinct—swept away in the nineteenth century. A real live cowboy? "

The lad blushed. "I was raised in the saddle, and it's a three-hundred-mile ride across the ranche."

"But cows!"

The boy laughed at Sydney now. "No, reindeer, and musk oxen. We have three hundred thousand head of stock, besides raising pelts."

"What are pelts?"

"Silver fox skins, sea otter, beaver, musquash."

The boy was straining every fibre of his being to win acceptance from this courtly man of the town.

"What a jolly outdoor life," said Sydney; "tell me more, do you——"

A faint sound of spurs arrested the trooper in mid speech. He instantly jammed on his casque and sprang sharp to "attention." In the curtained doorway opposite an officer appeared in golden armour; Sydney stood forward at the salute.

"A recruit, sir."

The boy went trembling and presented his letter.

"Hum—Mr. Browne?"

The boy blushed.

"We have your credentials, Trooper Browne, which are approved." He glanced over the letter. "I see that you passed with honours in horsemanship at the school of arms. Report at the Mess dinner to take the oath, after which you will be presented when her Majesty permits. Trooper Sydney, take charge of this gentleman."

As the Adjutant passed on towards the State apartments, a sergeant of the corps came running down the stairs, but stood aghast at the sight of his officer, and tried to conceal a large green cardboard box.

"Sergeant Dymoke," the Adjutant gave signs of impatience; "carrying parcels here?"

Dymoke grinned uneasily, dropping the box as he came to the salute.

"Forgive the Queen's champion, sir, for bearing the Queen's favours."

Now the Dymoke has from time immemorial in England a vested right of appearing at the Coronation mounted and clad in plate armour, to cast his gauntlet on the floor of Westminster Hall, and there challenge all comers to joust *à l'outrance* on behalf of his sovereign's right to the throne of this kingdom.

"I don't see," said the Adjutant, suavely, "what the Queen's champion has to do with that box of gloves."

"I intercepted these, sir," said Dymoke, "at the door of the private rooms; they are a gross of white gloves for her Majesty. I want to wear my Lady's favour to-morrow, and this is the first thing I've managed to steal for months."

"Pardon, sir," said Lord Sydney, saluting; "but though we can't all wear boiler plate like Dymoke, every trooper in the Guard wants to bear our Lady's favour."

"My Lord," the Adjutant smiled, "are we unfortunate officers to be left out? Sergeant, have one of her Majesty's gloves placed at every cover in the Regimental Mess, and pass the word for each man to fasten the Queen's favour on his helmet. If she is angry, she shall punish the lot of us—but see that no outsider gets a chance."

The boy was beyond surprise by this time, and, like a colt broken of shying, was introduced to the

men on duty. He was shown the armoury, mess-room, club-rooms, baths, stables—all that splendid barrack which fronted the palace.

Then Sydney took him to the room allotted to his use, and the lad's heart beat high as he put on the undress uniform of the corps.

"Do you feel like a savage now?" asked Sydney, laughing.

"I don't know how I feel."

The lad was changed beyond knowledge, his bronzed skin glowing against the silver, and if his face was made in the rough, his limbs were a matter for boasting.

"We're all savages," said Sydney, "all savages, we English, under our skins. Ever seen any fighting, Mr. Browne?"

The boy's eyes glistened.

"How I wish——" he sighed, "but there's been no big war for thirty years."

"When you live on a volcano which hasn't been in eruption for thirty years—look out."

"But do you think——"

"Do you think," said Sydney, "that we wear this confounded livery for fun? Do you think we've given up smoking, drinking, late hours—and all the rest—from piety? Do you think we drill hours a day for want of other exercise? Wait until you've been a few days in town, and then you'll know."

The lad was thinking things which had no words; and when that evening he sat at dinner in the banqueting hall of white marble, surrounded by all the circumstance of Margaret's incomparable court, he could not trust himself to speak. He rose with

the rest when the trumpets sounded, he put his lips to his glass when the vice-president cried—"Gentlemen—the Queen!"—but a little tear ran out of his left eye. He saw as through a mist the glittering splendour of the scene, and wanted to shout when the band played the National Anthem.

The Captain, Prince Rupert of Gloucester, had come forward to the front of the dais, with the other officers grouped about him. Then one of the trumpeters called a summons.

"Attend, Trooper Sydney."

"Come on," said Sydney roughly to the lad, and all eyes were upon them as they marched up the hall to the dais.

"Sir," said Lord Sydney, "I present Trooper Browne."

"Trooper Browne, kneel."

The lad bent his knee to the ground, and the Captain spoke again.

"I bid you lay your hands in mine."

Tremulous, the lad held out his hands until the Captain clasped them in his own, and began indifferently to deliver the great oath based upon Alfred Tennyson's code of Honour:

> "And swear
> To reverence the Queen as if she were
> Your conscience, and your conscience as the Queen.
> To break the heathen and uphold the Christ.
> To ride abroad redressing human wrong.
> To honour your own word as though your God's.
> To speak no slander, nay, or listen to it.
> To live a life of purest chastity.
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her
> And worship her with years of noble deeds."

Then the air rang with music, while the Captain, Lord Sydney attending as a squire, put upon the lad a tunic of mail, and on his head the lion-crested casque, bound spurs upon his feet, hung a sword from his belt and bade him in his life and to his death be ever a Christian, a gentleman, a soldier, in the service of Almighty God, the British Empire, and our Sovereign Lady.

The stately ritual was scarcely over, the regiment had not begun to disperse, the men just relieved from guard were still clattering in for dinner, when the great doors swung open at the back of the dais, and instantly every man in the room sprang at attention.

For the usher had announced—"Her Majesty," and Margaret, attended by her ladies, entered the mess-room.

"Cousin," said our Lady to the Captain, "we have come to demand the head of Sergeant Dymoke."

The Captain passed the word, and the Queen's Champion came forward to make obeisance.

"Sergeant," said our Lady, whose voice rang through the silent place, "you are charged with stealing my gloves. Guilty or not guilty?"

"Guilty, Madame," said the Queen's Champion, prompt to the word.

"You seem to be mightily pleased. I demand the gloves."

"I have but one left, Madame, and that next my heart."

"And where are the rest, pray?"

"I don't know, Madame."

But every man in the room had produced a glove

to wave in triumph, and the officers themselves were first in the offence.

"So this shameful theft has been committed by all my lords and gentlemen of the Guard. Do you all plead guilty?"

The hall rang with the triumphant answer.

"Then," the Queen's voice sounded more than severe, "we pronounce sentence. Your punishment shall be a full-dress mounted parade, with no excuses, at the stroke of the next hour."

There was a general gasp of consternation.

"We have been dull all day, a prisoner in the hands of our governess, but to-night we are mutinous, we shall take the air and ride with our Guard. Dismiss!"

The Guard could not be restrained upon this eve of the Coronation from giving three cheers for the Queen, but presently the Captain begged leave of his cousin to grant audience to a new trooper. The quiet hall was almost empty now, and a young lad, shaking with fright, sank on one knee to kiss a small gloved hand.

"Are you very much frightened?"

The sweet voice came down to him out of a mist.

"Very," sighed Browne, scarcely conscious that he spoke, for now he was looking up and saw the glorious beauty of the Queen.

Something hummed in his ears, and yet he could hear his own voice like the voice of somebody else.

"I love you. I love you."

"You mustn't," said our Lady gravely, "it's very wrong indeed. The Queen may have everything—everything on earth, save that. There's

nothing worth while in all the world save love, and the Queen must have no love. Don't you pity me?"

The lad saw a little quiver in our Lady's face, half grief, half laughter; then like a dumb animal which dare not even speak, he kissed her hand again.

That night, far away from the illuminations, the clash of music, and the roaring crowds, long silent streets towards Windsor awoke from their sleep with thunder of hoofs, the clank of steel, the music of armour. Queen Margaret was out for a scamper with her Guard.

IV

THE CORONATION

WHAT was that old London like, the London of 1980, of twenty years ago, before ever the shadow of the storm darkened her suburbs? The town which awakened on the day of our Lady's Coronation was certainly a magnificent capital. Although not nearly so big as New York, its population numbered ten millions, its streets and gardens covering the valley of the Thames from Windsor to Gravesend. Railway travel had so increased in speed and comfort, that men living fifty miles from the city could reach their offices in half an hour. Aerial pleasure-ships enabled even the poorest to get out of town for fresh air; and there were now fields within easy reach for the games and exercises which our people have always loved. Very old folk could remember the curse of the coal smoke, but in 1980 the air of London was as clear as that of the country. The dirt from horse traffic had ceased to mar the streets, and the terrible, monotonous slums of the nineteenth century were replaced by districts of tenement buildings surrounded with public gardens. London had become what Paris used to be, the capital of civilization, the centre of science, art and letters, the metropolis of pleasure. Many

millionaires from America and the Dominions had built their palaces in the West End, which had become a region of especial wealth and splendour, having its nucleus in the Imperial Court.

The day of the Coronation was heralded by pageants and festivals, the reception of Princes, the gathering of countless visitors. Troops were assembled from every part of the Empire, the Fleet was mobilized and soared like a glittering cloud above the Thames, the streets were being decorated, and buildings torn down to make room for spectators. All these things kept the public amused, and still no cloud had arisen.

On the 2nd of June the last edition of one evening paper announced that Mr. Brand had been waylaid by supposed tramps, robbed, and seriously injured. The morning papers of June the 3rd confirmed this news, stating that Mr. Brand had been robbed and nearly murdered in the night of the 30th of May, and the facts withheld until now. Chicago reported immense purchases of wheat, buyers not identified. Odessa and Melbourne both sent advice of a sudden and sharp rise in bread-stuffs, and meat, caused by unknown buyers. There was a sudden chartering of deep sea cargo ships by hundreds at home and abroad. Feverish activity was reported from the Chancellor's office, and Ulster had scarcely left his desk for the last thirty hours. An *attaché* at the Russian Embassy being interviewed, said everything was all right. These were the first faint zephyrs and little wandering breaths that ruffled the stillness of a world-wide calm.

The morning of the Coronation was sultry, and

even before the fiery heat of the day there was no little suffering among the crowds gathered to witness the procession.

At sunrise the corps of gentlemen-at-arms, the Queen's Blackguards, were drawn up in front of the palace. Regiment after regiment of Imperial troops were passing into the Mall to take up their positions, the air was full of music from their bands, as far as the eye could see the parks and avenues were full of marching troops, the glow of scarlet, the fluttering of colours. Absorbed in the spectacle, Lord Sydney lounged at ease upon his charger, when a voice addressed him by name, and a letter was thrust into his hand. He thanked the bearer, then opened the note which had come from Lyonesse.

"Read and destroy. I have been waylaid, and pretty nearly killed, but hope to be out of bed to-morrow. The enemy has the papers. At all hazards get them back. If you fail I must strike." This in Brand's writing.

Scarcely had Sydney time to destroy the message before the parade was called to attention, and presently he found himself swinging with his regiment into position. Deep in his heart he cursed Brand's carelessness. Was Ulster such a fool as to let the Russian papers be stolen again? "If you fail I must strike!"

Alone among the thousands in the royal pageant, alone among the millions who kept that festival, the trooper foresaw and feared.

Well Sydney knew the antagonists at war, the Chancellor, his own father, and Brand, his life-long friend, the one commanding the forces of the British

Empire, the other controlling powers awful beyond conception. Around him were his comrades in their shining harness, and ever he heard the roar of voices greeting Margaret, the Queen. Yet to him the pageant was a dream passing through white spaces of silence. And it was borne in upon him then that he would never see the light beyond the darkness, the peace after the storm. For him the way led on into the Shadow of Death, where a man must ride alone.

So swept the pageant onwards to the city, and thence through crowded streets to Westminster. In the van went detachments of the Imperial Army. There followed the dignitaries of the Commonwealths of Canada, Australasia, Africa, of the Dependencies and the Indies, attended by contingents from the several races of mankind, bodies of men-at-arms from all the forces of the Empire. Then came the estates of the British Realm, the Commons, the Lords, the Imperial Council, the Princes of India, the envoys, ambassadors, and foreign princes, the Household, and last the Queen's Blackguards in their dazzling silver, escorting the lumbering golden carriage of Margaret the Fair.

And always above them floated the pageant of the Aerial Fleet soaring against the blue, and sheltering the streets from the fierce heat of the sun.

As in many a former time of national rejoicing, once more the immemorial Abbey sent up the Te Deum and the solemn service of the Eucharist. Queen Margaret sat upon the stone of destiny, the crown of white gems was placed upon her head,

while the trumpets pealed, and the nobles of the old isles put on their coronets and rendered homage.

Once more, as in ancient times, the banquet was spread in the great hall of St. Stephen's Palace at Westminster.

Old white statues of the Kings looked down upon this new Queen, crowned by the Grace of God, Defender of the Faith, Defender of our time-honoured, well-tried Faith. That faith of disciplined freedom had made a little nation very great, and had given an awful and far-reaching power.

At the high table the great officers of the kingdom waited upon our Lady with every solemnity that has come down through the centuries of a nation's youth. The heat was stifling, the fierce light of the morning was quenched in a white haze, and the sun was hidden now, for the air was darkening. Many of those who sat at the banquet tables have since spoken of the prevailing depression and weariness. Once somebody laughed, and the sound seemed out of place, for people were seized with vague misgivings, a sense of restless uneasiness verging on fear. The hall became dim as though it were evening, darkness swept down out of the spaces of the timbered roof. The air was full of electric tension, and the silence that fell upon the assemblage was broken at times by the roll of distant thunder ; while the semi-darkness was now and then illumined by the flicker of far-off lightning. One of the Queen's ladies fainted, causing some stir for a moment, while the darkness deepened until it seemed to be night. A moaning wind caught the doors and swept them wide apart.

Then came a peal of trumpets while three horsemen clattered in from the palace yard. Here came the hereditary Champion of England, mounted and clad in plate armour, attended by the Earl Marshal and the Lord Great Chamberlain on horseback, and by a body of trumpeters and heralds.

Then a herald, lifting up his voice, made proclamation that the Champion of England challenged in single combat to the death, any who should dare dispute the right of Margaret to the British Throne. When the proclamation had been made, the Champion rode forward, and taking the steel gauntlet from his hand, he flung it ringing upon the pavement.

Even as he gave the challenge, the lightning blazed behind him, the roof was shaken with a crash of thunder, men sprang to their feet, and women screamed aloud, while with roar of wind, hissing rain, shaft upon shaft of lightning, and peal after peal of thunder, the dreadful elements took up the challenge. Amazed and appalled, the Queen and her nobles sat for the most part silent, but some few fled aimlessly from the tables, rushing here and there in panic.

Nobody noticed in that confusion that a trooper, in the armour of the Guard, picked up the Champion's gauntlet from the floor. By that act he challenged Margaret's accession, and accepted the gage of battle with the Queen's Champion.

Dymoke bent forward in the saddle, trying to see through the gloom.

"Who are you?" he cried. "Damn you! Let see me your face."

A blaze of lightning revealed to him the face of Prince Ali.

"You fool," he cried; "do you challenge our Lady's right?"

"Don't talk nonsense," said Ali, laughing. "Here," he presented the gauntlet with a gesture of mock humility, "you can't leave this lying about."

The Champion seized the gauntlet, and with it struck Prince Ali across the face.

The Indian drew back, his eyes gleaming out of the darkness.

"Afterwards," he said. "Afterwards. You have challenged Heaven, and your God has answered you."

V

THE GATHERING STORM

It was evening, and the sweet cool dusk brought many tired Londoners to the Mall. From the Victoria Monument to Trafalgar Square extended that old avenue where garlands of lamps festooned the trees, fountains sprayed liquid air to cool the gardens, cafés set out their tables and seats upon the gravel, and a military band provided music. At one of the tables a journeyman carpenter was at ease with ale and a pipe ; and looking about for a seat came a grey old soldier, an Anglo-Indian colonel, lately retired. When the artisan made room and found a chair, the old man gruffly thanked him and sat down.

"A warm night, sir ? "

"Ugh!" grunted the Colonel. "Where's that confounded waiter ? Warm ! Would you like a frost ? "

" Big crowd to-night, sir," ventured the carpenter.

" Disgusting babel. Ur-r-r ! In my time one came here for peace and quiet. I hate mixed crowds."

" The modern democracy," observed the carpenter, his eyes twinkling amusement. " In the old days my father could not have sat here chattering sociably with your father, sir."

"I didn't come here to jabber, curse you, sir!" said the Colonel. "Surely," he leaned forward, "I ought to know that old frump with the cloak——"

"Lord Fortescue?"

"The Chief of Staff! Of course. Dear me, how old he's grown. Polly Fortescue of course! Where's that damned waiter?"

The carpenter touched the Colonel's sleeve. "Look, sir, those two men in silver."

"Bah!" the old soldier snorted with rage. "Queen's Blackguards. Bah! In fancy dress, the bounders! This so-called Chivalrie Renaissance among the idle rich is a piece of damned disgusting snobbery. Ugh!"

"The young 'un is the Duke of Lancaster. The tall lean chap is the Chancellor's son, the Marquess of Sydney—rare good at the wicket, sir."

The Colonel scowled sideways at the passing Guardsmen.

"I hate this foppery—ought to be whipped."

"We may need them," the carpenter turned grave, "may need them badly, sir—may need every man we have in the Empire. Have you heard, sir, that Brand is provisioning the country for a siege?"

"Pooh! Old invasion scare again—young man, I was brought up to that."

"I'm afraid, sir, it's something worse than invasion. There's a rumour that unless the Government drops this Russian Alliance, Brand's going to read them a lesson."

"Don't talk to me about Brand, a beastly common tradesman—ought to be locked up. Bah!"

" Well, I'm a working man," said the carpenter, " and we're not much in love with this Capitalist Government. Hello, here's the Marquess of Sydney back again with—look," he pointed with his pipe stem. " That's John Brand ! "

" Brand, you say ? " The Colonel half choked with excitement, " point him out quick. Is that really Brand himself ? Why, damme ! "

Brand and Lord Sydney were talking in low tones, earnestly, as they passed through the lanes of trees.

" My dear Brand, it's too horrible," said the Guardsman, " you never could hold the reins through such a crisis. There must be some other way."

" There is only one other way. Get back the Russian papers. I must have those papers, I must publish them word for word, then leave the people to judge."

" I have tried. Can't you believe that I've tried to get them, Brand ? "

" I couldn't blame you, Sydney, if you refused your help. I know what it means to you."

" To rob my father, to betray him to his enemies, to hand him over to justice, then to be Duke of Ulster afterwards in his place, and bribe thieves and prostitutes to shake hands with me—the leper. I know what it means, and I have not turned back."

" Give it up, Sydney, leave it to me, and let me get the papers."

" First spy, then coward, I must sneak, and then run away ? "

Yet that old dread seized him which has shaken the nerve of many a gallant Englishman, before and

since, who has heard his country call on him to serve. What is this England? She gives her children to the wolves, to the sharks, the desert, the ice field, plague, famine, war; waters the continents with our blood, paves the sea with our bones, and goes on her way forgetting, asking for more. And if she is not content that we die the lesser death, but requires the son to give his father's body, shall she find men cowards, afraid to sacrifice?

"No, I have not turned back!" cried my Lord. "How could I turn back!"

Brand wrung Lord Sydney's hand but made no answer.

Then my Lord told him what had been done already, and how the Duke of Ulster defended the Chancellory from attack with a force of detectives, a cordon of police, and in his private room reliefs of Queen's messengers on guard by night and day.

"I think," Sydney continued, "I can force the outer cordon. On the eve of the Coronation, yes, Monday—that's five days ago, a recruit took the oaths, a fellow called Browne, a cowboy from the Arctic. He has let me make friends with him, a good horseman, Brand, and we'll be through the lines before the police can fire. That's all arranged, but the trouble begins when we reach Ulster's room. The Queen's messenger for the first night watch is a newly appointed man, a retired Anglo-Indian officer, Colonel Anderson, V.C., otherwise known as Red Pepper. I saw him just now as we passed, at one of the tables. A friend of mine was talking with him, a carpenter."

"I noticed him," said Brand. "The carpenter was pointing me out. Your friend, you say?"

"When I was a youngster he built me a model ship; we've been chums ever since."

"Isn't such a friendship awkward for him?"

"I asked him once," answered my Lord, "and he went over to the open doors of the workshop. He was bearing a plank, and stood there in the sunlight pointing at the shadow which he cast upon the floor at my feet. It was the shadow of the Cross. 'Don't you envy me that?' says he. Then I looked up at his face and seemed to see the Carpenter of Bethlehem, offering a crown in exchange for only a coronet."

"You have sent your carpenter to Colonel Anderson?"

"Yes," said my Lord, cheerfully. "My carpenter has a rare gift of making friends. I told him everything, and he said that surely Colonel Anderson would serve the Queen if he knew."

"Colonel Anderson," answered Brand, "will obey the Queen's orders. Go to her and get a written command."

* * * * *

The Duke of Ulster was writing a letter to his son. "I am lonely," he wrote, and scratched out the words; "I am all alone," he wrote, and drew his pen hastily through the line. "I am left all alone. For thirty years I have laboured to leave to my son a great heritage of honour, to pass down to my heirs such——" He tore the paper to shreds and began again. How could written words carry

his pain to another, or any confession, or any cry for help clear that estrangement!

For many days this poor traitor had been silent in the flames of his punishment, but now the fire burning within him kindled, and his mortally wounded spirit screamed for mercy. Only the night heard, only the pitiless walls rang back in answer. No human ear would ever hear that cry, no human heart would ever understand. In this night his soul died. Never again did he hope either for the help of men or the pity of God. Never again was he known to show mercy to either men or women, but fought with ruthless power in blind pain.

One whose name may not be given found fragments of scattered paper with the words upon them which the doomed man tried in vain to write to his son. The fragments have been by a strange chance preserved, surely the most pitiful scripture in all our national archives. Perhaps at the Day of Judgment this cry of a dying soul may yet be weighed and lie as heavy in the scales as Ulster's sin. So one prays who has himself need of mercy.

For a long time the Duke lay back motionless in his chair, his face bowed down upon his breast. Then an electric instrument stirred on the table beside him, clicking and throbbing out a printed message.

"My Lord Duke,

"I have the honour to warn you that the safe in your lordship's office will be broached to-night from the rear. We hope to take the assailant red-handed, but any papers of vital importance should

be secured from a possible injury by explosives. I have the honour to be,

"Your Grace's Obedient Servant,

"PATRICK O'ROOKE, Sergeant."

The Duke hurriedly crossed to the safe, set the cypher, opened the doors, and secured the package of the Russian papers. After some hesitation he opened a cupboard between the windows, and hid the package in the pocket of an old office coat. A spy concealed within the panelling of the walls saw everything, the matured result of a plot to get the papers taken out of the safe and placed within reach of capture.

The Duke came out from the closet, turned to close the door, then with a violent start swung round raising his arms as though to defend himself. The Secretary for War had entered unannounced, was crossing towards the desk, and him the Duke confronted, his head thrown back, white fluttering hands waving dismissal.

"Leave my room," he said haughtily, "request my secretary to announce you, sir."

"Bosh—keep that for your flunkies, Ulster, I've got no time for your trumpery etiquette. Come to the House if you want to save your Government."

The Duke sat down in his official chair, and under lowering brows, glared at the Minister.

"Sir Myles," he said, "do you think you are entirely safe insulting me?"

"Safe? Confound you, Ulster—do your worst. We'll both be ruined by midnight anyway. Brand's

people have attacked us in the Commons—they've produced this damned Treaty of yours with Russia—clause by clause, and the House is furious. We've had to give them the lie that there's any such Treaty. Come down and defend yourself, man, if you want to stay in office."

"Sir Myles," answered the Chancellor, "go to the Opposition with all your tribe, if you dare! Go, take your panic back to your seat in the House, and when I follow, see that I find you there. Get out of my room."

The Chancellor was alone in the silence, gnawing his fingers, biting his nails to the quick.

He must go to the House of Lords, he must fight, he must get the Commons pacified, the Russian Treaty accepted by Parliament—that or war with the Leagued Nations, that or the destruction of the betrayed fleets, that or invasion, conquest, the fall of the Empire, his own destruction, and never-ending infamy. What could he do in the Parliament, what threats, sacrifices, appeals—to rally his scattered forces, to stay their panic? Yes! In one flash he saw his way cleared. He rose from his place triumphant, his eyes alight with victory! The Queen's move gives checkmate to this King Brand III.

A secretary crept in timidly, offering up words, then with a gasp of fear recoiled before Ulster's eyes.

"A letter? Bring it here. Go."

The Duke saw the superscription, and a trembling seized him, so that he sank back into his chair, for the writing was in the hand of Brand, his adversary,

strong, hard, ominous. He wrenched the cover open, bent, and read, his livid face and burning eyes set on the script.

And in effect the ultimatum ran: "Resign, or fight Lyonesse."

He looked up, his lips quivering, his face convulsed.

"I must, I must," he muttered. To resign was to face the Russian vengeance, to fight, destruction. "I must, I must!" he whispered. "I shall go to the Queen."

Then throwing himself upon the desk, he buried his face in his arms.

VI

THE PENANCE CHAMBER

THERE was one door in the palace which the frivolous passed on tiptoe, where the boldest paused before they ventured to knock. Miss Temple lived there, the Queen's governess, who was supposed to refresh herself daily from the Lamentations of Jeremiah, the Psalms of Imprecation, and the cheering pages of Job. If ever the Queen's ladies romped in the corridor, she would come forth denouncing the iniquities of the age, and once when a profane Guardsman blew cigarette smoke through the key-hole, Miss Temple curdled his young blood with lurid prophesy.

On Monday, the 9th of June, pretty Mrs. Osbourne called. Her Jack had told her that his cousin, Miss Temple, was " a gay old puss who would tell naughty stories by the hour."

Miss Temple had lately published fulminations against the wearing of boy dress by athletic women, so at Jack's mischievous suggestion, Mrs. Osbourne called in her riding costume to hear the naughty stories. What transpired between the two ladies is not exactly known, but there are rumours of a locked door and sobs. Anyway when Lord Sydney dropped in for tea he found Miss Temple complacent

and Mrs. Osbourne damp. Sydney, having urgent business, was by no means gratified at finding the old governess engaged.

"Now, pet," she said cheerfully, as she rose to welcome the Guardsman, "this is the Marquess of Sydney."

"Rattles, but doesn't bite," he responded. He was on duty, and the armour was always a nuisance indoors. Moreover, he could not find a seat, for Miss Temple dated from the quaint times of the old King when furniture was devised solely for ornament.

"Glad to see you, Mrs. Osbourne," he said, plumping abstractedly down on a doubtful stool. "Miss Temple often lets me come for tea."

"Oh!" quoth Mrs. Osbourne in a state of collapse. "Oh, thank you!" Sydney presented her teacup, and sat down again with his own. Then he turned to Miss Temple.

"How is our Lady?"

Miss Temple sighed. "She must have done something more dreadful than usual, for she wears plain black, poor child, sits in her penance-room, and watches the vulgar sparrows on the terrace. Do you know, I waited a whole hour with her before she even spoke, yes, and then she sighed. 'Dearie,' she said—you know her funny way,—'these sparrows have fleas'—she will be vulgar sometimes: 'and the Queen has worries, and the Chancellor has his party, and the Party has constituents, and the constituents have taxes, poor things. But the worm'—now why should she think of a worm!—'the worm has his skin scratched all the time so he

never feels the least irritation. I wish I was a worm!' There! Did you ever hear such notions? I never taught her about worms, I always tried to lead her up to think of higher things. But then, just when I was going to correct her, do you know a great big tear rolled down her cheek. So I told her to comfort herself with the thirty-ninth Psalm. I wonder now what she has done?"

"Pawned the crown jewels?" suggested the Guardsman.

Miss Temple rustled with disapproval. "I think it's a message from the Chancellor. I'm afraid your father must have demanded another audience." Then the old lady glanced towards Mrs. Osbourne, who might gossip. "Of course," she added stiffly, "it must be about the duel."

Mrs. Osbourne sitting bolt upright on the sofa, knees together, toes in, squeaked like a mouse.

"What—a duel, oh!"

"Yes," said Miss Temple. "Prince Ali is to fight the Queen's Champion." Then she bit her lips in great vexation, for to a mere civilian she had betrayed a secret of the Guard.

"That's all right," Lord Sydney laughed heartily. "We had the duel this morning. I was Dymoke's second, and young Browne for Trooper Ali. We seconds arranged the detail—swords *at ten paces.*"

"But," said Miss Temple, primly, "swords won't reach!"

"No," Sydney shook his head, "they won't. You should have heard our warriors cursing! I'm afraid my revered father has graver business than that to worry our Lady."

"Oh," chirped Mrs. Osbourne, "and my Jack said there was a dreadful rumour on the Stock Exchange. They say that monster at Lyonesse is behaving disgracefully. Yes, he has made horrible threats about the thingum-jig, the what d'ye call 'em."

"The price of gold?" Sydney was exchanging glances with Miss Temple.

"That's it," said the governess; "that must be it. You know how strongly I disapprove of profane books. This morning my poor child was fretting herself to death about Mayne's 'Gold and Lyonesse.' I took it away from her. What a shameful thing that Margaret should be crying over a book like that! Why should a godless man like Mr. Brand be clothed with such frightful power? *Let him put his mouth in the dust.* Now why are such things permitted?"

"Miss Temple," said Sydney, "can you remember back to the Black Decade? But no, you must have been a mere child then."

"A child? My dear James, I was a grown woman. We were so poor that we had to give up crinolines, and come down to two-yard skimps. The country was desolate, *the rampart and the wall languished together*, and coals were so high that we had to use briquettes. Trade was going all to pieces, and to keep up the Fleet, they actually taxed excursion tickets. My father was ruined by the crash in Centralias, and I went out as a governess."

"But Lyonesse," said Sydney, "has made everything all right. We were never so prosperous."

"My dear James, I am still a governess.

Lyonesse? It was a moor in those days, *and the foxes walked upon it.* Yes, there was a very frousty old man who smelt of tobacco, in a shed where Lyonesse stands now, and a rumour got about that he could take common water and make it into gold. That was John Brand I. Yes, the workshop was very smelly, I remember; but think of it, pet, he was making solid blocks of gold as if they were only bricks."

The old lady was very busy at her lace cushion. "Yes, my father took me to see him just when I got over the mumps—most unbecoming, dear, with red flannel wraps. His son, John Brand II., was a fat man with a wart on his nose, and oh, such manners! He was the one who brought hundreds of tons of gold to the Mint, so that the price went down, and all the mines had to close, and lots of people were ruined. Russia went bankrupt; that was in 1940, and all the really nice people there had their heads chopped off in the Red Terror. That was an unspeakable mercy, because, you see, they had to leave off invading India.

"People used to say that the gold making was *all vanity and lying divination,* but the Government asked Mr. Brand if he would mind being taxed. He said he mustn't be taxed too much or he would go over to the United States, but he didn't mind paying for the fleets, and armies, and things."

"Do you know what taxes Lyonesse pays now?" said my Lord. "Brand pays over a hundred million pounds a year in Imperial taxes alone. Besides that he has to give all Governments a big profit on their coinages—and that amounts to millions a year saved

to the tax-payers of the world. Goodness only knows how rich the man is. I suppose—— "

Miss Temple, who hated interruptions, turned briskly to Mrs. Osbourne.

" Now, my dear pet," she said, " I hope James doesn't bore you ? "

" Oh no, dear Miss Temple, I'm quite used to it. My Jack, you know, is on the Stock Exchange."

" Now where was I ? " asked Miss Temple. " Oh yes, the city of Lyonesse. Well, that was named after the place where King Arthur came from when he was washed up. Merlin the sorcerer, you know, was fishing, and caught Arthur ; and afterwards when Arthur didn't die, you know, but went away to be healed of his grievous wound by the Three Queens in one barge—well, I forget exactly how it was, but anyway King Arthur went to Lyonesse, wherever that is. And some day he's to come back and save England. Lyonesse, the real place I mean, has grown, until now it has any amount of people (and they do say that the co-operative stores are ridiculously cheap and most fashionable), and it's been the saving of England. Now John Brand II. is buried there—cremated, I mean—and John Brand III. reigns in his stead. Is it true, Sydney, that he's a woman hater ? "

" Jack says he's a beast," was Mrs. Osbourne's comment ; " but then Jack has lost a lot himself on Lyonesse Branch Industrials."

" *Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth,*" said the governess, fiercely. " I wonder if it is finance which has worried my poor Margaret."

" No, Miss Temple," Sydney launched his

bombshell. "My father is going to force our Lady to marry the Grand Swine Alexander."

"That horrible story again! Oh, James!"

"Yes, again, Miss Temple. Can you wonder now why she wears black, and sits in her penance-room envying the sparrows?"

"I must go to her," cried Miss Temple, rising, in great disorder. "My child! My poor child! Let me pass, Lord Sydney."

But the Guardsman barred her passage. "Her Majesty," he said, "is engaged."

Sydney turned upon the little lady in boy dress.

"Mrs. Osbourne."

"Oh, you made me jump!"

"These matters, Mrs. Osbourne, are secret."

She rose, drawing on her gauntlets. "Of course," she twittered, "I would never dream—wild horses couldn't——"

"They wouldn't be so rude, dear lady. But is it true that there are rumours on 'Change?"

"Oh, dreadful rumours, my Jack——" she was arranging her hair—"says that the gold fiend is going to sell his gold at a penny an ounce. He says that if that's true a sovereign won't buy a loaf of bread next week, but then, dear Miss Temple, that would never matter to my Jack. He always has rusks, you know. Well, good-bye."

"Good-bye, pet," said Miss Temple, kissing her on the forehead.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Osbourne."

"Good-bye, Lord Sydney—Ta-ta!"

"Thank goodness she's gone," said Sydney, closing the door behind her.

"Oh, but Sydney," Miss Temple quivered, "she'll tell it all over the town."

"Better than a newspaper," said the trooper.

"Sit down, James," Miss Temple resumed her place, "you tell me that Margaret is being forced into marriage with that odious Russian prince. But what has this to do with Lyonesse?"

"Dear old Mummie," answered the Guardsman. "Don't you see? Lyonesse doesn't care who marries the Queen. But Lyonesse is a business concern, and has no use for a Russian Alliance."

"And quite right, too."

"So Brand says to Ulster, 'Break with Russia, or I lower the price of gold.'"

"His father, John Brand II., did that, and Russia went bankrupt!"

"Russia will go bankrupt again, France bankrupt, Germany bankrupt. Who'll dare to disobey the man who can bankrupt civilization?"

Miss Temple thought that dear Sydney was getting very pompous and uplifted.

"Dear me," she tossed her head. "Your Mr. Brand will be getting himself arrested. A sort of commercial person—who is he to give orders to the Chancellor of the Empire?"

"This commercial person," Sydney laughed, "happens to live in a respectable democracy where a shopkeeper can sell anything he pleases at his own price."

"But, James, if the old Russian Empire was swept away by his father——"

"The world may be swept away by the son, Mummie. At all costs the Queen has got to be

saved, England has got to be saved. There's still time to prevent this horror. I can't explain—I daren't—but you've got to help, you've got to go to our Lady. Tell her that if she will only give me a private audience I may be able to put an end to the Russian marriage."

"But, James, she daren't give a private audience to you. We should be found out, and there'd be such a scandal."

"You must be present, Mummie, but even at the risk of scandal go to the Queen."

* * * * *

In her penance-room our Lady was giving audience to the Chancellor, and while he, in his clear, exact speech, set forth the perils of the State, Margaret was thinking about something else. She sat before the window upon a low, square stool, her elbows on her knees, her chin upon her hands, just crushed into a lovely dimple by the mouth. Her lips were slightly parted, her dreamy, big, blue eyes set on the gardens.

The Empire, said Ulster, had prospered in the trade of Lyonesse, in great revenues furnished by the ungrudging Brands; and the people were proud of the giant merchant firm, strong in its long-tried honour and good faith.

But Margaret looked upon the wind-swept elms, the big white cloud-fleets sailing in high heaven, and silver flaws of wind coursed down the lawns. The Chancellor's words throbbed on her ears unheard.

The standard of all value, gold, was secured, he said, in the keeping of John Brand. What else, save gold, could measure the workman's wage, the

cost of shelter, and the price of food? Strike down that standard, and the bread-winner could have no wages, could pay no rent, could buy no bread.

But Margaret saw the lilac and the may, the trees weighed down with bloom, swayed to the rushing wind, and little white daisies laughed along the lawns. And still the Chancellor's voice drummed without meaning.

Stab a man to the heart, was the statesman's thesis, and his blood will drain away leaving death behind. But gold was the life-blood of nations, gold money the driving force of civilization. Brand's monopoly was the life-blood of human society, in his good faith the public welfare lay, and all mankind depended on his honour.

Now Margaret heard the dull pain quaver in Lord Ulster's voice, as he urged the extremity of the general peril that Brand had broken faith.

"I wish I could understand," said the poor girl dreamily. "I've tried so hard to understand."

When the flowers unfold their petals to the sun; when wild birds preen their first fine bridal plumes; when a maid first trembles to a lad's shy kiss, spring stirs young blood, and the rose-flush of heaven glows in a girl's pure face, as the dawn of childhood flames to the day of life—then God ordains the sacred truce of Love. Child-life is shadowed with fears of the Unknown, the days of a woman are dark with the sorrows of the world, but between the time of fear and the coming time of sorrow is set the holy Sabbath, and truce of Love. Bitter the lot of a woman who looking back from the sunset time of life, and that long twilight waning down to night,

remembers no daybreak, no flush of sunrise, no Sabbath of Love which strengthened her for pain.

Queen Guinevere went maying in the spring, Elizabeth rode a-hawking, Marie Antoinette played milkmaid ; and Queens, who bear the heavy burden of state, have need of love and laughter to cheer the way, before the crown of diamonds is changed to a crown of thorns. Hungry for freedom, for love, the delight of life, Queen Margaret turned with a little bitter smile, turned her back to the gardens, and tried to think of finance.

" Don't be cross with me, dear Lord Ulster, I can't understand yet. Tell me again what Mr. Brand has threatened."

" To sell gold at a penny an ounce."

" But the coin, the sovereign, is something more than gold. It's stamped with a dreadfully hideous portrait of me, and my name, for a proof that the head wasn't meant for a crocodile."

" Yes, madame, it pledges the national honour that melted down or ground to powder its precious gold remains of untarnished worth. Failing that, the coin, even with the Queen's image, is spurious."

" A promise to pay," said Margaret, " and the promise keeps if I'm beggared."

" To pay, madame, yes, in food or fuel, or clothes, but the question is *how much?* For in the great sea of commerce, the prices rise and fall ; and like a post to measure the flood and the ebb, so is the changeless standard of gold recording the tides of trade. Without that index, no man could sell his labour, or buy food. If Brand strikes down the standard, the world will starve."

"I understand," said Margaret. "Have you told me all?"

"About this peril, madame? No, not half. The wreck of the world can hardly be put in a phrase."

"I mean about Mr. Brand's letter. He threatened these terrors unless—unless what?"

"Unless the Queen suspends all relations with Russia. That means war with Europe."

The Queen laughed nervously. "Is Mr. Brand so wicked as all that? Shall we have him beheaded? I've got a headache, and I'd like to have somebody beheaded."

"I wish it were possible," the Chancellor sighed. "Statecraft was so simple, so direct, so easy once. But now——"

"Would Mr. Brand be as fierce if he had to make his threat openly in public?"

"Excellent!" said Ulster. "I could call him to appear at the Bar of the Commons. But that is a last resort—a forlorn hope. There's a gentler way than that. Do you remember, madame, the old Greek myth of Una, who led a lion captive to her beauty. I cannot fight this lion——"

Margaret blushed.

"Turn this gentleman from his purpose. I come to the Queen to confess myself defeated, beaten, humbled, a toothless old man in a terrible mess. Ah, madame, you can hardly know as yet the mysterious power of a woman's beauty."

"It sounds such utter nonsense," said Margaret, "and besides he's a monster, he hates women!

Subdue this lion ? " she added, thoughtfully. " Perhaps Lyonesse will do the like with me."

* * * * *

The Chancellor was gone, and Margaret sat alone, watching the passing shadows of white clouds, when Miss Temple came in upon her Lady's solitude, trembling lest the Queen should scold her, and hovered over her with a kiss and some whispers.

" Why, of course," said Margaret, gaily. " Let him come."

The governess returned leading Lord Sydney by the hand, while at the sound of the man's armour, Margaret felt a queer small thrill in her veins.

" Sydney, come here."

He bent upon his knee, kissed her white hand, but dared not lift his eyes to see her face.

" Dear me," said Margaret, " please be human, Jimmy. I've been sitting here all day trying to be good, whereas I'm just crazy for a game of cricket. Do you remember when you bowled, and raised a lump on my shin as big as an egg ? "

He looked up into her face, and though she heard a little quivering sigh his eyes seemed to be laughing.

" You were Peggy, and I was Jimmy then, when you were ten and I nineteen."

" And me up in a tree stealing the cherries, and that awful farmer trying to shake me down ! Then you came to the rescue."

" Can you trust me, Peggy ? "

" Why, of course ! What's the matter ? "

He took a written paper and a pen which he laid on Margaret's knee.

"Will the Queen trust Jimmy even to signing that?"

"Colonel Anderson," she read, "Queen's Messenger, is to obey the bearer, Trooper the Marquess of Sydney."

"Is it something very wicked?" she asked.

"Awfully."

So the Queen wrote in great haste: "Margaret. R.I."

The Secret of Lyonesse

An Interlude

This is the secret of Lyonesse, that the Divine methods of creation had been applied to the needs of man.

Come just for a moment upon this path of thought, leaving the old earth, to tread a course of stars, to traverse the Milky Way. Come to the very end, to the edge of the Formless Void. And now look down into Space, into the outer darkness, into the Ether.

The Almighty has put a stress upon it, and the Ether lives. Stressed in one way and we know it at once for Matter, a fine dust. Its desire for rest we know as Force, driving that dust in a whirlwind roaring through the dark. The dust is heated by its movement, and flames into light whirling through space. That whirling cloud of light is a new-born sun. So suns are born. The sun cloud throws off a lesser cloud, which gathers into a separate sphere. The little globe whirling about its

parent will cool and become a planet, like the Earth. So worlds are born.

There are many Forces, but one group, the ripples of the Ether, form an octave like that of music. First of the seven notes are the long, slow ripples which we feel as heat; second, are the Hertzian ripples used in the wireless telegraph; third, is a region of the unknown; fourth, is the octave of Light the rays of the spectrum; fifth, the Rontgen rays; sixth, the Gamma rays proceeding from radium; seventh, the ripples of the Etheric Force. It is upon the notes of this vast scale that the forces of creation play the music of the spheres.

The dust vibrations are of many kinds. One we know as gold, another as hydrogen, a third as carbon; and when two kinds vibrate in perfect harmony, they mingle together just like notes of music. Thus oxygen and hydrogen vibrating in harmony are water.

The first man who ever walked upon this path of thought was John Brand I. He measured and reproduced the vibrations of matter, the tremours of Force. For him, in very deed, the stars sang together. First of all mortals he heard the music of the spheres.

It was John Brand II. who made hydrogen cease to vibrate, so that it lapsed into ether, then struck that mighty chord which brought the ether to life again as gold. He had mastered the Divine alchemy, he followed upon the footsteps of the Creator, he played the music of the spheres.

For ages the alchemist, not fathoming the ways of God, had failed, but this humble and reverent man grasped the great secret. He learned how to make not only gold but all the elements of matter; he struck the chords of Force.

VII

THE TAMING OF LYONESSE

To the foreman of the works, the physicist William Robertson, had been entrusted the secret formula for making gold. As a shareholder in Lyonesse this man grew fabulously rich, and more, the brilliant Sir William Robertson was ambitious of power and splendour. Ill could he bear with the new master of Lyonesse, plain Mister Brand of the shabby clothes, the thread-bare furnishings, the cautious policy. The two men were never friends, time made them enemies.

Robertson earned a barony by joining Lord Ulster's party, and expected an earldom for publicly affronting his master. Then came the day of trouble, when Brand joined issue with the Chancellor, and war was imminent between Lyonesse and the Government. The ingenious physicist was frightened, foresaw disaster whichever side he joined, and promptly betrayed them both. He was in America now, starting new factories to undersell the gold from Lyonesse.

So ended the great monopoly, so was the standard wrenched from the master's hand, so came the fall of gold. Brand only knew of one way upwards. For him ascent of mountain heights meant sweating

labour, endurance, patience, faith. He could not understand the winged vanity of this servant who betrayed him in his own household, or of Lord Ulster, who had betrayed the Empire. These men had bartered their souls for wealth, rank, office, as though the admiration of their fellows could ever lift them up above the earth. They bartered their souls for wings, and that which rose upon the wings was only a swollen corruption.

Brand had no pity for the tortuous errors of weak men, only a dull anger without understanding, a smouldering rage which the slightest breath would kindle into the flames of war. Then the Queen sent for him. A woman was to turn aside the fury of Lyonesse, to subdue and tame this man who reined the coursers of the sun, and drove the awful powers of creation.

The Queen sent for him. Brand mentioned to his secretary that he had a business appointment, and so, leaving his London office for an hour, he walked to the palace, glad of a little exercise and fresh air. He came to the gates, presented his card, and was told that popes and archangels would be denied admittance if they came to a state ball in a tweed suit.

Lord Sydney got him passed through the gates, but drew him aside under the shadows of the porch.

"Have you no other clothes?"

"Not in London, Sydney. Is it vital?"

"To a woman, yes."

"It seems there's some sort of a dance here, to-night."

"Only a state ball," said the trooper sarcastically,

" for the royalties of Europe, the Embassies, and all the dignitaries of the Empire—most of them took the trouble to change their clothes."

They stood within the great Ionic portico, lighted with flaring torches, occupied by the Yeoman of the Guard in their ancient scarlet livery, bearing halbards. By the door stood clusters of gorgeous officers, and within one could see walls of translucent alabaster, clusters of malachite columns, a vast perspective melting into haze of golden light.

" Princes and dignitaries," said the master, thoughtfully. " I wonder how many of them will be alive next month."

" Is it so bad ? " asked Sydney.

" Unless you can get me the Russian papers."

" This afternoon," answered Sydney, " Her Majesty gave me the order."

" Use it to-night."

" I can't leave the palace."

" These fripperies are more important ! " Brand turned away from him in angry impatience. " I can wait no longer. Take me," he said, " to the Queen."

They crossed the portico, they entered the vestibule, but at the foot of the alabaster stairs Brand drew back, clutching Lord Sydney's arm.

The trooper saw the colour leave Brand's face.

" What's wrong ? " he asked.

" That carpet," said the master under his breath. " Why is it red ? "

Lord Sydney stared at him amazed. " Why not ? "

Without answer, the great man brushed roughly

past him and hurried on. Did he foresee that within a few weeks these alabaster stairs must run cascades of blood, the gorgeous corridors beyond be choked with corpses, the gaunt and starving mob ravage these chambers of state, while shattered dome and reeling tower crashed down through the burning roof? Did he foresee that the princes and dames and gentlemen who thronged the rooms were to offer tiaras of diamonds for horseflesh, to haggle with stars and orders for a cup of water, and be dragged out of the cellars and murdered in the streets of the blazing capital?

People shrank away from the look in Brand's eyes as he approached them, many who began to comment on his dress, stopped in mid speech, a lane of silent spectators opened to give him passage, a confusion of rumour followed in his wake, and the news of his coming spread excitement to every corner of the palace. For no light purpose would the master of Lyonesse come unprepared in haste at such an hour, business of moment was afoot, a crisis in public affairs. Was it open war between John Brand and the Government?

Attended by Lord Sydney, the master entered the throne room, and even he seemed to be moved by the dazzling splendour of the scene. He saw a vault of gold sustained on columns of onyx, an atmosphere of radiant light, dense with perfume, tremulous with music, a confusion of robes and gems, the slow grave movement of some stately dance, then a lane of people opening to the very steps of the throne, where Margaret stood attended by her court.

Her robes were like an iridescent cloud, and wondrous opals starred her coronet. And like the changing colour of the gems, her face was different as he looked, a shade of annoyance melted to a smile, yet in the very gentleness of her greeting, the man was doubtful of a mischievous gleam in her eyes.

Brand heard Lord Sydney making the presentation, felt that the people about him seemed embarrassed, wondered what fantastic etiquette he ought to follow, looked our Lady straight in the face, took her extended hand with reverence in both his own.

"Forgive me," he said. "Please tell me what to do."

He could not hear his own words, his heart so thundered, and every artery in his body thrilled. Margaret was shaking hands with him frankly, cordially.

"Yes, shake hands," she cried, tremulous with laughter. "Let the Queen shake hands with the King of Lyonesse!"

"I am ashamed," he said, humbly. "I ought to have dressed—to have——"

"Come in disguise? Why that would be absurd for Lyonesse. We will ask you only to wear the Rose of England," she took from her shoulder a blood-red rose, and fastened it with a jewelled brooch upon his breast. "My Lords," she cried to her attendants, "witness that we create the Order of the Rose for Englishmen who have served their country well. Brand of Lyonesse, first Knight of the Order of the Rose, this is our thanks for great

and ungrudging service. Come, honour us with your escort, Mr. Brand."

She led him to a balcony overlooking the gardens —faint came the sound of distant music there. She thought of the things to be said, the things to be done, wondered how she could deal with this rough monster, hated the Chancellor for setting such a task, gave up the whole business in despair, and set herself to find out why Brand hated women.

"Here we can rest," she said; "you shall sit there and let me stand where I can see all my beech trees. Sometimes I stay here all through a summer night with Orion and the Pleiads to keep me company."

He could see her face dark against the full moon, wonderfully still. Her breast rose and fell as she breathed, her every movement swayed the changing glory of her moonlight robes. She seemed not earthly, but kin of great Orion and the Pleiads.

"What is your garden like in Lyonesse?"

"My garden?" he answered, trying to control his voice.

"I know," said Margaret, "what it must be like, a garden of rocks and the white surf for flowers. Your gardener is the wind—I should like your garden."

"From my cottage," he answered, "the wall goes down three hundred feet sheer to the breakers."

"Oh, I can see it! A wonderful cliff with big outstanding stacks and bastions, where the sea-eagles breed. How beautiful! But can you live there in winter?"

"Yes. I had a fright though once when a sea wrecked my study."

"At three hundred feet?"

"Seas have been known to break higher than that. My sister and I spend many an hour watching the big sou'-westers. Then the spray lashes miles inland over the city."

"And what is your sister like?"

"I believe she is plain," he looked at the Queen; "yes, she must be very plain, but somehow I never thought of that till now. I'll ask her."

"Please don't," said Margaret, hastily, "she might be angry."

"I'd rather not then," his grey eyes twinkled. "Sarah has so many things to vex her."

"And you always live in that eyrie?"

"Oh no, we go away sometimes in the *Mary Rose*, our yacht."

"For holidays?"

"We went to the Himalayas last, and perched for the sunset view on Everest."

"I didn't think that even an aereal yacht could live up there."

"I could show the Queen some wonderful places if she would venture a trip in an etheric yacht."

"How I should like to see the world like that!" The Queen sighed. "I'm tied up, you know, and everything I do is most improper."

This, then, was the monster, the dragon of the Chancellor's fears, this simple-minded, plain-living merchant, whose pleasure was in the greater, wilder moods of Nature, who spoke so gently of a virago sister.

" Please tell me about the factories," she said.

" Must I talk of sympathetic vibratory physics ? "

" Heaven forbid ! Why that's worse than even the Budget ! "

" And in practice a simpler, easier trade than cooking."

" Even the changing of water into gold ? "

" A matter of rule of thumb, like making bread. But I must not bore the Queen by talking shop."

Our Lady's eyes intently studied Brand. " Do you know," she said gravely, " that my advisers call you a public enemy."

The man looked up at her smiling. " They lie," he said frankly.

He dared to call her Chancellor a liar ! " You will explain," she said.

" Oh, but I didn't want to offend you ! "

Margaret smiled despite herself. " You said you would make gold cheap."

" I am so much a public enemy," he answered, laughing, and spoke with easy confidence of a new merchandise in wares of gold, of plates and cups, of lamps and ornaments, for the common use and comfort of the poor, such as had been beyond the means of kings. He spoke of dreary brick houses, and dismal streets annealed with rough gold, of silver columns and gemmed entablatures, of public monuments in golden bronze, of cities which will not rust, or tarnish, or get dirty, which frost cannot splinter or rain dissolve, their splendour imperishable and their celestial beauty. Margaret thought he had taken leave of his senses. For which of us in

those days dreamed of the golden age or ever supposed that this should all come true?

Our Lady's voice had a resentful note as she reverted to the issues of the time, as in the Chancellor's terms, she voiced his horror at the fall of gold.

"A standard of gold set in the tides of trade? A beautiful image," said Brand, thoughtfully. "But, dear me, how it condemns poor Ulster! The tide is an age-long ebb of falling prices. So is the standard changed to a cross, and the debtor hangs there."

"I don't understand," cried Margaret, affrighted.

"Neither did the Jews. The cross was of timber once. Do you remember? and He who suffered, expressly said, 'they know not what they do.' The Jews were priests then, now they are bankers, brokers of money, usurers, capitalists of Ulster's party. And the cross is changed to gold where mankind hangs crucified. 'They know not what they do.'"

"Oh, this is blasphemy!"

"May I not even speak of the cross—I, the bearer of that cross?"

Our Lady looked at his clear eyes, and was ashamed. Then trying to defend her cause—

"My Chancellor came to me," she cried.

"It is not then the crucified who cried to the Queen for help? Oh, may I plead for them?"

So gravely, sorrowfully he spoke for the men who labour on the land, who face the dangers of the air, who sweat in the deep pits, who drive the machines in the factories—for all the great labouring nation.

"Oh, Mr. Brand, I can't listen to this! The nation sends the men who advise me."

"The Jewish nation? Yet even Ulster, their high priest, has generously permitted my coming."

"Not to convert me to your strange views, Mr. Brand."

"But to be condemned unheard? Oh, surely not!"

"Go on," said the Queen, indignantly.

"I spoke of the standard, or cross of gold," he said. "I, the idol maker, dared to speak blasphemously of the false god I have to uphold."

Margaret saw the twinkle in his eye, and could hardly restrain herself from smiling.

"I'm going to be still more wicked," he went on. "I'm going to tear the idol down and break it all to pieces. Ulster would agree with me that our weatlh is the stored-up labour of the bread-winners, that all our capital arises from their patient, endless work. By that measure we are so much better than our savage ancestors, whose way of earning was to snatch and run."

The Queen nodded assent.

"These counters then, which we call money, are something more sacred than stamped gold or silver. They are hours of human life beaten out on the anvils of destiny. My tokens of labour were first used at Lyonesse, and it has become the most prosperous town in the world. The United States adopted the labour money, and it is the most prosperous of all nations. My currency stops half the cheating in finance, and Ulster's capitalists are in a state of fear. I speak for the whole labour party

throughout the Empire, and for my own dear country, for after three generations we Brands are still Republicans of the United States. Yes, Ulster has argued wisely of the tides of trade—he dreads the tidal wave. I have set it in motion, and if this Chancellor attempts the least resistance, it will sweep away his Government."

Then Margaret turned on Brand in furious anger. "You threaten this tidal wave," she cried. "You dare to avow this sudden, cowardly, unprovoked attack upon my Government."

"So far is it sudden," said Brand, with grave respect, "that my foreman, bribed by Ulster with a title, has bolted, to set up American factories, and undersell my gold."

"Is this true?"

"It was in my letter which Ulster has shown to the Queen."

Margaret was silent.

"My attack," said Brand, "is cowardly."

"You admit that!"

"Yes, I admit the fear that the Government will commit suicide. In this emergency I strengthen the public credit with certain lands as a gift forever to the British nation. That also is in my letter which the Queen has read. There is no danger to the Empire."

Margaret sank into a chair, and remained silent.

"My attack," continued the master, "is unprovoked. Far be it from me to even seem provoked when the Chancellor offers the Queen in marriage to a Russian dipsomaniac lately released from an asylum. The Chancellor no doubt is the Queen's servant expressing her Majesty's will."

Our Lady's fan broke in her hands, but she remained silent.

"The public enemy," said Brand, "has so far avowed his sudden, cowardly, unprovoked attack upon Ulster's party. I have but reminded the Queen as to terms of my letter which had escaped her memory."

"Don't torture me," cried Margaret. "I have not read the letter!"

"I dare not accuse the Chancellor," said Brand, "of leaving his sovereign to face such issues unarmed and unprepared. He is an English gentleman incapable of conduct such as that."

"Stop, I command you!"

"No," said Brand, rising to his feet. "If the Chancellor has not warned the Queen, I shall! Bear with me, Queen Margaret! I have to deal with rough and brutal facts, to say things that hurt. Forgive me; be patient with me."

Margaret sat in rigid silence, at bay, waiting.

"The Queen has called me here," said Brand, "and I must speak. I have come to plead for the people, no matter what the cost. Russia, France and Germany are mobilizing. In feverish haste the League is arming for the invasion of England. Your people are never prepared for war; the Imperial fleets and armies are utterly unready—I dare not say how weak. Ulster, absorbed in appeals to Russia, offering terms for peace so shameful that they had to be denied in the House of Commons. There is no hope in war, no hope of peace. Nothing can save this country but the wreck of the Leagued Nations by the fall of gold."

The Queen sat motionless, staring.

"There need be no fear," he said. "Ulster's people dare not resist, lest they be swept away with the Leagued Nations."

Then Margaret leaned forward in her seat, wide, staring eyes intent upon his face, a slow hand reaching out along the balustrade, and groping fingers found an electric bell.

"Are we deposed?" Her voice was low and tremulous with passion. "Will you usurp our crown when you have swept away our Government?"

But the man who was to be tamed heard nothing, because of his pity for this helpless woman cursed with the heavy burden of the Imperial crown—betrayed, abandoned, yet still of unbroken and unflinching courage.

He took from its clasp the rose which the Queen had given, the blood-red Order of the Rose for Englishmen who have served their country well.

"It is bruised," he said, humbly, "by my clumsiness."

"It still has thorns!" cried Margaret. "You have slandered our Ministers, and to-morrow you shall meet them face to face, to repeat this treason word for word at your own peril before the House of Commons. You have insulted your sovereign!" Her hand struck the bell thrice. "Gentlemen of the Guard!"

Presently two orderlies of the Guard drew up in her presence, saluting.

"Gentlemen," said her Majesty, "we have been insulted. Expel this man from the Palace!"

Margaret sat alone in her balcony trying to hate

Mr. Brand. She had never been so angry in her life.

All men did her worship, hundreds of millions rendered to her their homage, whole continents obeyed her, and in her name the masters of the world commanded. Her Imperial Majesty had never been disobeyed, and here was a man who dared——

What had he dared ?

He dared to pity her because she had lost her temper.

She tore her fan all to pieces and scattered the wreck on the floor.

This monster had come to be subdued, to be tamed, to be turned from his purpose. He had not been much subdued, or to any great extent tamed, or in the least degree turned from his purpose. He was not even ruffled ! The surf of her fury had beat against his cliffs, and then he said he was sorry to see her bruised.

There was the stab of defeat. Thrust a sword into a pool, and where it touches the water it seems to bend. Such is the sweet obliquity of a woman's mind that, in its clearness, her defeat may seem better than triumph. He was rather a nice monster, this Brand ; friendly in a quaint way, very frank in his admiration, and, whether she liked it or not, determined to save her from the Russian marriage. She was very angry still—with the Chancellor !

When at last she gave the Chancellor audience, her face was hard, her manner cheerful, her bearing defiant.

" Ulster," she said, " I've failed."

The statesman was not such a fool as to ask for

reasons. Well he knew the danger signals, the anger growing in her eyes, as she spoke with the directness of a man.

"Mr. Brand," she continued, "wrote you a letter, part of which you told me, the other part kept back. Give me the letter!"

"Oh, madam, not that, I implore you."

"I insist."

"Dear Lady, forgive an old, tried servant of the State, who would give his life to guard you from such things!"

"Give me that letter!"

There were tears in old Ulster's eyes as, with a shrinking reluctance, he protested—even while he obeyed—speaking of things unfit for the Queen to see, and devilish evil planned against her throne.

But Margaret, in burning eagerness, wrenched the paper from his hand, and bending forward to the light which streamed from the windows, spread out the sheet upon her knees and read.

There is no need to quote this forged letter, which made the Queen believe that Brand of Lyonesse, under pretext of the gold crisis, was plotting to seize the actual reins of power.

Subtly was the mind of our Lady poisoned until the Chancellor seemed to defend the realm from foul and deadly treason, against the nation, and against the Queen.

"Ah, madam," he said, "I am an old man, my eyes are dim with the passage of many years in the royal service. I cannot claim the inspired foresight which commanded that this traitor expose his own infamy at the very bar of the House of

Commons. Your Majesty has been pleased to hale this man before the bar of the nation's judgment. When he speaks in public, when he threatens the nation, when he declares war against civilization—then, and then only, will public opinion support the Government, and we shall deal swift vengeance. But there will be a panic, this threat of the fall of gold will disturb the peace of the nations, and, madam, the nations will hold Ministers responsible."

"But you're not."

"What, madam, do France, Russia and Germany care for that? Remember the League has but one purport, one policy—the destruction of the British Empire. Here is the chance for which they have been waiting for many years. They are mobilized, they are ready, and their strength is overwhelming."

"Yes," cried the Queen; "but our Treaty with Russia."

"If it were only signed. We have offered Russia her own terms, yet she hangs back."

"But why?"

"Because the old Emperor dreams of a dearer and more personal bond."

The Queen turned pale.

"The Russian constitutional monarchy allied by blood to the ancient and royal line of England. Ah, madam, the dream is worthy of that great prince. For, once unite these two Empires with ties of blood, and henceforth that alliance ensures the power which alone brings peace."

"And the newspapers will gush," said Margaret, bitterly. "And the people will shout. Oh, this is worthy of you!"

The Queen rose from her seat trembling, her face white with fear, her hands clenched, her teeth set. But what was in her heart could not be spoken. From her childhood the lesson had been drilled into her brain that princes may not have hearts, that they may not love, or mate, save for public ends. But used as she was to the curse of the blood royal, she shrank back affrighted when national policy doomed her to marry the Grand Duke Alexander.

"Ulster," she cried, "Margaret of England says that an English gentleman might be found, who is neither a prince nor a cousin, nor a coward, nor even a drunkard, and the nation be all the stronger."

"Madam, remember the blood royal of that great race which has for twenty centuries reigned in this island. Your ancestors never failed the nation, though many died for England, and all have suffered for her. Is Margaret less royal, less brave, than they? If the Queen fails us now, this coming world-storm of financial panic will bring the great invasion on our coasts. We need in our sovereign, courage sprung from a race of kings."

The Queen was in torment, and now in the background of her mind, a sunburnt, manly gentleman was speaking of his cottage on the cliffs, of his sister Sarah, who was plain, of the surf which beat upon the rocks, and the spray which drove for miles, and the spindrift high in air above the storm-lashed granite of Lyonesse.

"There will be war," said Ulster. "Thousands must die upon the field of battle. Women must cry, and orphan children must starve."

"Let there be war," cried Margaret. "War is better than shame."

"Your Majesty, if war can save us from shame—let there be war. But when we are overwhelmed, when all our people are given over to their enemies, then there is shame. When our bread-winners, ruined by the invasion, must starve to pay indemnity to Europe—then there is shame. And shall the last of our great sovereigns leave us to shame like that?"

Margaret, standing between the glow of the lamps and the soft pallor of the night, robed in a texture of changing glory like the wings of angels, looked up to the smiling face of the dead moon. Must she, like that poor servant of the world, the life fire quenched and hope utterly perished, move on an orbit of unending patience, and by a borrowed light from Heaven shine for cold duty's sake before mankind? So many a woman with a broken heart has made of her living death a light for men.

VIII

THE MOTHER OF PARLIAMENTS

THE mother of Parliaments was in session, that venerable and most majestic court which struck the fetters from our slavery and made us free. Here was the serfcreated citizen, here we gained liberty of Faith, freedom of utterance, freedom of education, freedom of commerce. And here Brand cut the last shackle of all our chains, and gave us the free finance.

There is no need to repeat his words. He had mankind for audience, and those words will never be forgotten.

Consider, then, what he did :

He moved to save the Empire from Ulster's treason.

For the confounding of the Leagued Nations, and to take our enemies at unawares, he hastened the fall of gold.

To be exact, at three days' notice, he offered ounce ingots of fine gold at a penny each to be sold by the Bank of Lyonesse in every large town throughout the world.

He promised to accept British money at full value, giving in exchange the Labour currency as used in America and at Lyonesse.

This Labour money may be defined as a currency based on the security of public lands, all value of land being created to the labours of the community. With

the increase of public revenues from State land, the taxes are gradually remitted.

Mr. Brand further opened two thousand shops in the Kingdom where food was offered for Lyonesse currency.

And to strengthen the credit of his enemies in power, he gave us his private estates, worth more than three hundred million pounds.

A sound swept through the chamber like a sob, as the great merchant received from an attendant a roll of parchment, and in silence bent down laying the gift at the feet of his hearers.

"It is the beginning," he said.

He was standing before a single rail of brass, the Bar of the Commons. In front of him extended the open gangway to the table bearing the mace, and above sat the Speaker in his chair of office. On either side rose the close-packed benches back to the walls, aloft were the crowded galleries.

The wavering factions were won for Lyonesse, the Labour party waited exultant, and a division then would have wrecked the administration, saved the Empire. Still the hard-stricken Ministers were silent, and all men in strained attention, breathing deep, fastened keen eyes upon the American's face.

"Let no man blame me for the Fall of Gold. Through the treachery of one of my servants the monopoly has fallen from my hands, the barriers are shattered, and the world goes on. We are in the presence of forces irresistible, powers beyond control. Against this hour of danger I have provided money, credit, food to strengthen the hands of the Government, to sustain the life of the Empire.

"But I must warn you, and beg you to hear my warning, that any attempt to withhold these things from the people will result in overwhelming disaster."

Then in an awful silence the leader of the Government rose from his place upon the Treasury bench.

"Do we understand, Mr. Speaker," he said, angrily, "that Mr. Brand threatens the Imperial Government?"

"No," answered Brand; "I warn."

Sir Jonas Mempes raised his hand, stilling the disquietude of the House.

"Mr. Speaker," he turned to address the chair. "We are warned, sir, by this gentleman that he is about to debase and degrade the coinage which bears the image and superscription of her Imperial Majesty, and which also bears a statement of value to which is pledged the good faith of this Government. The Queen and her lieges are invited to assuage their defaulted honour with a currency bearing the countenance and superscription of Mr. John Brand.

"Whose is this image and superscription? That of Mr. John Brand, citizen and merchant. Render, therefore, unto Mr. John Brand the things which belong to Caesar!

"I do not deny, sir, the undoubted right of any citizen and merchant to sell fine gold, or to issue promises to pay, whether stamped upon metal or paper, or the skins of beasts. But if we find such commerce doing treason to the sovereignty of our Lady, the Queen, with dishonour and ruin to her lieges, I claim that this Parliament has the higher

undoubted right of restraining that commerce by force.

" I will render to Margaret, Queen and Empress, the things which belong to my sovereign, but this august commonwealth of nations, this British Empire is not to be ruled by any broker of money, or any merchant of gold.

" Sir, I understand that Mr. Brand warns us that he is about to seize control of the public moneys. Now, the whole function of Government consists in the maintenance of public credit, the collection of revenues, and the application of funds to the uses of the community. Such function, vested once in the singular puissance of kings, has become the heritage of the electorate, the Divine right of the people. The maintenance of that right unimpaired either by kings, armies, traitors, or mobs is the special and peculiar function of the House of Commons. To interfere with, or to threaten that right is felony. Mr. Brand is either our King, or he is accused out of his own mouth of high treason.

" Sir, it is within the constitutional rights of the House to authorise the Speaker in the committal of Mr. Brand to the Clock Tower, but I submit that this gentleman is here of his own free will, and stands with his rights untarnished as in some sort our guest.

" Again, the House of Commons may take legal proceedings through the Attorney-General, but I submit, sir, that this is a case in which the whole Parliament must as one man confound a perilous conspiracy, or be lacking in its duty to mankind."

The sullen mutterings of the Opposition had

grown now to a roar which drowned the Speaker's voice.

"I observe," said Sir Jonas at last, "that Mr. Brand is still present as a guest of the House."

Loud shouts rang out from beneath the galleries, members started to their feet.

"Order!" cried the Speaker. "Order! Sergeant-at-Arms, conduct Mr. Brand to the doors!"

Then far above the tumult and confusion of the House, the voice of Sir Jonas Mempes rang out his challenge.

"On behalf of the Government, I beg leave, Mr. Speaker, to give notice of a bill attainting Mr. John Brand of High Treason!"

* * * * * *

Slowly the American walked, attended by the officers of the House, across the deserted lobby, along the empty corridor, then into Westminster Hall, and down the broad stairway, until the tumult died away in the far distance, till only the stone flags answered to his tread, and the walls echoed, His way was lined with statues, pale ghostly effigies of Kings and Statesmen, their triumphs all forgotten, their griefs assauged, their sins, their penances, their burning passions stilled. Many of these had been arraigned, attainted, slain, or fretted themselves to death, or died in harness, builders of England, architects of her Freedom, forerunners of her Peace.

So he came to the doors and passed out into the sweet air of the evening, refreshed and humbled. Perhaps, in his zeal for the Queen, he had dealt rather too abruptly with the Commons.

This man was but thirty years old. With reverend age such as ours, and our maturer wisdom, he would not have dared to mount that perilous Chariot of the Sun, or threatened senates, or laid impatient hands on grave affairs. It was not his fault that we were falling into Russian vassalage, or that his disloyal servant shattered the standard of gold; he lacked the benefit of our sage advice, and if he greatly dared, he suffered for his audacity in trying to rescue the Empire by affronting the Commons.

Some day his statue will be joined to that white avenue of the mighty dead who set the landmarks on the way of life. That night, whatever its cost to the master of Lyonesse, we entered the region of Etheric Power, and the beginning of a more spacious age. For so rolls the ordered motion of our race from height to height up the great way towards Heaven. The fences are breaking down, the barriers are conquered, and our horizon broadens as we climb. We hope that the walls of Time and Space shall melt, the skies be torn asunder like a scroll, and when we win to the last heights of human destiny, we shall stand upon white summits, we shall behold the Infinite.

Rose flush of evening on the Abbey spires, cool bloom of dusk on that long range of palaces housing the departments of State, violet splendour of countless lamps, and Whitehall seething with traffic, so Brand saw Westminster on that last day of peace. Quiet in mind, a little tired, he strolled up Whitehall, taking the western pavement, touching his hat when men saluted him. He thought of Margaret,

the Queen, and the memory of her face was very pleasant. He had just passed the narrow entry of Downing Street when he heard a sudden sharp fusillade of gunshots, and looking back noticed the instant gathering of a crowd. He went on very anxious at heart, thinking of Sydney. He was abreast of the old Admiralty porch when he heard behind him the clatter of a horse charging up the street at full gallop. He paused, turned, went out upon the causeway, and stood waiting full in the lamplight. The horse, coal black, came tearing down upon him, the rider, a gentleman of the Guard, his helmet and armour shining like Sirius, greeting him with a shout of recognition, waving something in the air, a package of documents, the Russian papers! The black horse reared to the bit, the rider sprang from the saddle.

"Well met," he cried; "Mr. Brand, these are from Trooper Sydney. Take my horse, escape!"

Brand took the package of papers, which reeked of blood.

"Is he dead?"

"Captured, sir, and Colonel Anderson shot. I'm going to join Lord Sydney!"

"Tell me your name."

"Browne."

The trooper glanced towards the advancing police.

"Mount, sir. Ride for your life!"

Brand swung to the saddle. "Where's the Queen?" he asked.

"At the Opera." The trooper snatched a white glove from his helmet. "Send this to our Lady."

"Thank you," said Brand, "I'll tell her how you served." And so broke away at a gallop.

The trooper, drawing his sword, turned upon the police, and delayed them with the formalities of his surrender.

IX

THE ROYAL PREROGATIVE

If Brand knew that his formal attainder was pending in the Commons, he did not know that the Chancellor had ordered his summary arrest.

The horse carried him to the Opera House, and from the portico he found his way up the main stairway into the foyer. There, at the ante-room of the royal box, an equerry was in attendance who conveyed his word to her Majesty.

"A Queen's messenger desires audience, and sends this white glove as a token."

Police officers had entered the box office below; Brand heard them on the stairs; and orders were shouted in the very foyer before the equerry returned.

"For the Queen's sake," he begged, "be quick!"

"Her Majesty will grant you audience."

Brand dashed past him into the ante-room. "Now," he said, "guard that door."

He found himself alone in a small, dark chamber, the very walls trembling with the crash of triumphal music, and loud voices from the corridor behind were already demanding admission. Then curtains were drawn asunder, and Margaret herself stood in the opening, against the glare of the auditorium, a

glory of light shining as a halo about her, kindling the diamonds of her tiara. Her face was in shadow, her eyes big and dark as they searched the gloom of the place, until they fastened upon him.

"Mr. Brand? How dare you! You a Queen's messenger?"

With a gesture of rage, Brand flung the Russian papers upon the table between them.

"By right of blood!" he answered. "In the attempt to bring those papers to you, Colonel Anderson gave his life, Lord Sydney and Trooper Browne their liberty—and I am Queen's messenger in their place."

Margaret, with trembling hands, turned on the lights, and, moved by an impulse of horror, shrank back from the blood-stained papers; then, startled by a noise in the corridors—

"What's that?" she cried.

"Don't be frightened," he answered quietly. "It's only the police."

"What do they want?"

"Only me, don't trouble yourself. Here,"—he took the Russian papers, and wrenched off the blood-stained cover—"read," he said sternly.

Wonderstruck at his daring, confused by the glitter of his eyes, humbled by the prescience of some great calamity, Margaret sank down into a chair, while Brand spread the papers before her. She was dazed at first, understanding nothing of what she read. Presently she became absorbed, scanning page after page in feverish eagerness. Then, in deadly rage thrusting the papers aside, she rose confronting Brand.

"You accused our Chancellor, you slandered him, you insulted your sovereign with falsehoods about our administration, you were expelled from our palace in disgrace." She clutched her throat, hardly able to speak. "And you come back—with these—infamous slanders!"

"I have come back, woman, with the proofs for which Colonel Anderson gave his life-blood and two gallant gentlemen their liberty."

"But you have accused our Chancellor!"

"Not I." Brand pointed downwards at the papers. "These in his own hand accuse the man who has sold your honour."

"My honour? You mention my honour? Understand this, and tell all who care to hear, that it has pleased us to take for our Consort His Imperial Highness, the Grand Duke Alexander of Russia, whose sword will deal with questions concerning our honour. Now go!"

Brand bent forward across the table and stared into the Queen's eyes.

"I go," he said, "to Sydney and Browne in prison, and on to Colonel Anderson in Hades, bearing the Queen's message that by her orders, Ulster betrayed the Formula of the Fleets."

"The Formula of the Fleets? What do you mean?"

"I mean that if you are moved neither by absolute proof of Ulster's treason, nor by the blood of your servants, then you are partner with him, you share his guilt, for you betray your people."

Then Margaret quailed before his eyes, shrank back from him and turned away her face.

" Oh, I can't, I can't ! " She looked up at him, convulsed with terror, her arms thrust out in protest. " I can't believe. He couldn't betray me like that ! Betrayed ! Betrayed ! "

" Yes," answered Brand ; " betrayed."

" But the Formula of the Fleets ? Prove your words. On your peril prove everything you say—who charges our Chancellor with divulging the Formula of the Fleets ? "

" His own son brings the charge. I have Lord Sydney's word."

" Lord Sydney's word ! And that is more than proof. But how shall I know that you come from Sydney ? "

" That glove ! " said Brand. " How else should I have that glove ? "

" And yet ! " Margaret wrenched a letter from within her dress. " Since yesterday I have kept this with me to read, to study." There was hope in her voice, a flash in her eyes again. " You wrote this to the Chancellor. How can you speak of treason ; you, who wrote this ? " She flung the letter across the table. " Read ! "

" My letter to the Chancellor ? Why, this. My letter was short—that's not my signature ! " He held the paper against the light. " The paper—how does it come to bear this water-mark, the Imperial cypher, ' M.R.I.' ? The water-mark in mine is ' Lyonesse.' Is Lord Ulster insane ? Does he suppose that I—a business man, would send such a letter as that, and keep no certified copy ? " He opened his pocket-book, and produced a copy sworn before witnesses. " Let these be compared ! "

Intently Margaret studied both the water-marks, and the texts of these two documents. Then, without a word, crossed to an armchair over against the curtains, and there lay back with closed eyes, thinking.

"Mr. Brand," she said at last, wearily, "you and my Chancellor charge one another with treason. You spoke of Sydney—what part has he in it?"

"He came to me," Brand answered, "a month ago, gave me these papers, begged me to save the Queen, and delivered his own father into my hands for punishment."

"Go on."

"Without any proofs against him, I had to attack the Chancellor at once. There was no time to lose. Without any proofs, I attempted yesterday to warn the Queen of her peril, and was driven out from her presence. Without any proofs, I was compelled to-night to face the House of Commons. A Bill is being passed attainting me of High Treason."

"How did you get back these papers?"

"Yesterday Lord Sydney begged the Queen to sign an order commanding Colonel Anderson to obey him."

With a little startled movement, Margaret looked up.

"How did you know that?"

"I sent Lord Sydney."

"Proof upon proof," she muttered. "Please go on."

"By the Queen's command, Colonel Anderson stole these papers from the Chancellor's office. He was shot down, Sydney was captured, Browne

surrendered. By accident the message passed to me."

"And the police are waiting outside that door for you?"

"I am an outlaw," Brand laughed, "and here in sanctuary."

For a long time her Majesty remained silent, while the ante-room shook with the tremor of music, and the glow from the stage shone softly between the curtains.

The performance was an oratorio based by Mr. Stevenson upon the Divine Comedy of Dante, but in accordance with a usage still new in 1980 both vocalists and chorus stood in the wings of the proscenium, supported by the orchestra, and a concealed cathedral organ. For the oratorio was rendered in the music of colour upon a screen, and Stevenson's "Inferno" is notable for the dim, awful beauty of its opening numbers, and for passages of terrible splendour. For an hour there was no word spoken in the ante-room, while the light changed and glowed between the curtains, and the great chorus swelled and rolled from the proscenium.

At last, with a little sigh, Margaret looked up. "Tell me, Mr. Brand, what shall I do?"

"Who am I," said Brand, with reverence, "that I should dare give counsel to the Queen?"

"At the risk of your life you came to warn me."

"That the Chancellor has committed treason; that I am a rebel in open revolt, that war has been waged to-night, blood has been shed. This very house is guarded by my yacht."

Margaret was silent.

"How shall I dare advise the Queen?" said Brand. "I have come to offer my life and all the strength of Lyonesse to defend my sovereign and my adopted country. I dare not advise, but weigh the facts, Queen Margaret, and let me hold the scales. As head of the State you must decide for England. There is no compromise, no middle way. Denounce the Chancellor of Treason, or commit me a rebel to prison."

Margaret leaned forward, her hands resting upon the arms of the chair, her eyes full of wonder.

"And you will submit?"

"Am I not the Queen's servant?"

"But they'll kill you."

"Should I care to live?"

His manner was changed, the roughness was all gone, as after a storm the ocean is at rest, deep, quiet, fathomless. His eyes seemed to smile, and his voice was low and reverent.

"Perhaps I am wrong, but I should not live to see this country a vassal of Russia. My people at Lyonesse and I have always worked for England, and we all have a certain pride in working well. Set that aside, my life is not the weight in either scale of the Queen's judgment. Who will serve England best, Ulster or Brand, the traitor or—the rebel?"

"What if I refuse," said the Queen, proudly, "to treat you as a rebel? What if I, the Queen, share the guilt of rebellion with you, and place myself at the head of this revolt?"

"There will be civil war," Brand answered coldly, dispassionately, "the most terrible war in all the annals of the world."

From Margaret's neck there hung a cross of diamonds, a thing of pitiless white splendour. The Queen pressed the sharp stones of it against her forehead.

"You," she said, "are ready to die for England, and I—and I—and I have sold my body to this Alexander of Russia. Death would be such a little thing compared with that. If you give yourself up, and I give myself up, there'll be no civil war."

"There'll be no war," he answered thoughtfully. "No war if the people accept the shame of peace."

"They will think as we do," said the Queen. "The men like you, the women like me. The same blood runs in them—and they'd cry out for war." Margaret laughed nervously, and dropping the cross, bent forward, her elbows resting on her knees, her face in her hands. "To think for the people—to live for the people, I was drilled to that, to be married for the people with a thing that one could not touch with the end of a glove. Ugh!" She shivered. "For the people, and I hate them! Yes, hate them. I wouldn't mind dying for them, but to live for them like that is horrible!

"I shall never forget that night when mother told me. Nobody will ever know what she suffered bravely, quietly, hopelessly, wearing what she called her crown of thorns. And then one night she took me on her knee—a poor, little, scraggy thing I was, all arms and legs. How she cried—and I was crying too. She told me that after her I must be brave and wear the crown of thorns, and I nearly cried my head off. Yes"—Margaret's voice broke with a little

whimper—" and I didn't know then all that it meant."

She brushed away a tear with her gloved hand, then looked up.

" I wonder," she said abruptly, " why I told you —you of all men. Forget what I said, do you hear ? —forget that I whined like a sick child—forget, I say ! No, don't speak to me." Then in low, awed tones, " I've got to think for the people." The horror rushed in upon her senses, and feeling as one does in the presence of the dead, in overwhelming sorrow : " I am the Queen," she said, " and I must hold the scales, must judge for the people. I can't, I daren't. Oh, what am I that I should judge for the people ? A little while ago I was playing with dolls, on Monday rode with my Guard, on Tuesday danced, and to-day I have to judge between you and Ulster, between life and death, between war and peace ! "

But to Brand it seemed a dispensation of heaven that the fate of mankind was not at the mercy either of a treacherous politician, or of a master of industry, stained with the vices of the world, blunted and brutalized by lifelong struggle. This child, in her innocence and her purity, could only see the great plain issue between right and wrong.

Margaret looked up into his face. " And I must make up my mind ? " she asked.

The whole fate of the world hung in the balance, and he answered gently—

" Yes."

A burst of triumphant music filled the theatre, and then the clatter of applause, and, in the silence

afterwards, from some far distance of the streets, a sound, a confused murmur growing to a dull, ominous roar.

"Hark," whispered the Queen, "what is that?"

And Brand answered, "That is the beginning of the storm."

A hum of conversation in the house drowned out the sound, the auditorium was flooded with electric light, men moved from their places to rest in the interlude, and standing at the curtains Brand looked down out upon the golden tiers garlanded with roses, and throngs of women waving their slow fans.

Outside in the streets men were shouting, but he could not hear what they cried, amid the gusts and eddies of the gathering uproar. A crowd had surrounded the building now, turbulent, yelling. Gentlemen from the audience who had strolled out to the stairways returned to the tiers with blanched faces. Some bade their women put on their cloaks to leave, many brought newspapers, and were assailed with questioning. The tidings of the night spread on from tier to tier, an orator began shouting from the gallery and had to be removed; even in the grand tier a woman screamed.

In haste the management had the lights turned down while organ, orchestra and chorus took up the measure of the oratorio, but not even the seven Hells of Dante could still that audience, or drown the sullen, vengeful roar of the crowds outside. Many who tried to leave the theatre came back unable to face the tumult of the streets. The management began cautiously to withdraw the audience by way

of the iron doors and the stage, while the performance dragged on amid tumult and growing panic.

Only once in that hour Margaret spoke. "Are you not afraid?"

Brand smiled and shook his head. "Not even a little."

"I see the Queen's face," he said, "I hear the Queen's voice, and my world has narrowed down to these four walls. Presently the Chancellor will come, and the Queen will give her judgment." He laughed a little, looking down at her from his place by the curtains. "Outside these walls of life there is another broader world than this. The storm has broken here, there are no storms yonder, in that other broader world where we shall serve. Here you are the mightiest of all earthly sovereigns, and I your servant ready when you need me. But there we shall have hands to grasp the stars, feet to tread the orbit of the sun, and greater strength to serve for greater ends. You hold life in your right hand, death in your left hand, Margaret, and presently you will judge whether I serve weakly here, or strongly in the hereafter. Why should I be afraid?"

"You've given me back my courage," said Margaret, humbly. "I shall not be afraid."

It was then that the equerry came announcing the Chancellor and two Ministers of State who desired audience.

"Let them come," said Margaret, and when the doors had closed, she told Mr. Brand to wait in the royal box. "Leave me," she said, and with a smile held out her hand to him. "Whether it is life, Mr.

Brand, or death, you will know that I tried to do right ? "

" I am your servant," he answered, " in life or death," and bending down he kissed our Lady's hand.

Margaret was alone when Ulster came, standing before the table, while all about the small, dark, silent room swept the roar of the great panic. The two Ministers bowed low as they entered her presence, but her eyes were upon the Chancellor, so, instead of bending his head, he looked at her wondering, and laid a roll of parchment upon the table. Then he drew back from before her stare, and bowed profoundly.

" Your Majesty," he muttered.

" You may speak."

Before her staring eyes the Chancellor stammered, " My colleagues and I—and I have begged this audience, madam, on business of most desperate urgency."

" What is this business ? "

" It is the will of the Parliament that Mr. John Brand be attainted of treason felony. A Bill has been passed, and requires only the royal fiat. *La Reine le veult ?* "

" My Lords," the Queen spoke slowly, monotonously, staring all the time into the Chancellor's eyes ; " I send this matter back to an Imperial Parliament which has had no time to think."

" Is it possible," cried the Chancellor, indignant, " that your Majesty sets the whole Empire at defiance ? "

" Is that a threat ? "

"No threat," he answered, furiously; "but a reminder that the Royal Prerogative fell on the scaffold of King Charles the First. Under the guidance of her Ministers, the Queen will not expose herself to deposition."

"My Lords,"—her Majesty turned upon the attendant Ministers—"you have heard me say that this Bill concerning Mr. Brand must be again considered before we make it an Act of Parliament. You have heard my Chancellor threaten deposition, even death, as though the Queen could be bullied with the blustering of so pitiful a coward. As a woman I demand your protection from this man, as your Sovereign we command you to obey."

The Chancellor tried to interfere.

"Silence," cried Margaret. "Silence! I, the Queen, am speaking, and I, not the Parliament, am England. My Lords, I charge this man, my subject, with being a paid spy and agent of Russia. He has attempted to imprison Mr. Brand because he is loyal and has come to my defence. He has betrayed the Formula of my Fleets. I command you to seize the Duke of Ulster, and to hold him as my prisoner. You shall disobey me at your peril. Arrest that man!"

But these Ministers, supposing Margaret to be insane, backed slowly out from her presence.

X

THE DAWN OF THE TERROR

We have been slow to anger with our kings, grateful if they were not altogether bad, tolerant through much evil. One very shifty exponent of Heaven's grace we killed, but, indeed, we were sorry afterwards, made him a statue, mourned for him, dubbed him the Martyr, and set up the son in his place, who was seven times worse.

And even when we, the Democracy, took the burden of Government on ourselves we did not grudge our allegiance, supplies, apparel, and dignity of state to the princes of Britain. English or foreign, good, or bad, or infamous, we loved them as much as ever. We were not unmindful of the leaders who fought and bled for England long ago, but rather we upheld in gratitude and loving memory the ancient symbols of dead power. Crown, sceptre, throne, were reverenced on bended knees, by a people who, being kings, had become regal, both in might and in their courtesy.

There cannot be two sovereignties in this realm. When her Majesty attempted to wield in very deed the royal power, she found that the iron sceptre of her fathers had withered to a reed, and in her hands broke. She was no longer Queen.

At midnight Parliament knew nothing of Ulster's

treason, knew nothing of Brand's purport to strike the Leagued Powers down before they had time to attack. These lords and gentlemen of the Imperial Council, the Peers, and the Commons, waiting for the Chancellor's return with the royal assent, were loyal men representing the whole federation of the Empire, in honour bound to maintain the sovereignty of the people. But they saw that with the Imperial currency discredited by Brand, and Lyonesse money discredited by Government, the sun would rise upon conditions of general panic.

It was no time for polite remonstrances, threats, or the slow processes of law. Brand had taken sanctuary with the Queen ; and in her presence, or in her house, he could not be arrested while she reigned. At all hazards he must be captured, and, if only for that necessity, the Queen who gave him shelter must be deposed.

All the powers of the Imperial Council and the Parliament were instantly called to aid. The new day broke upon an Interregnum with His Grace of Ulster as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth. Margaret was called upon to abdicate, her Palace was invested, and demand made at the gates for delivery of her person.

Brand was attainted, his possessions were sequestrated, a reward offered for his capture. It was made a penal offence to circulate Lyonesse money or to trade in specie. A moratorium accorded grace to debtors. The day was made a Bank Holiday.

But in the main issue the Government failed to effect entry of the Palace, or to procure the body of John Brand.

At midnight Brand's yacht escorted Margaret to her Palace, and neither the Queen nor her servant flinched from the instant necessities of civil war. Indeed, the Duke of Ulster had scarcely reached his office in Downing Street when, like a meteor, the *Mary Rose* swept down out of space and discharged a body of sailors and guardsmen upon the roof of the Chancellory. The building was ransacked from garrets to basement, the safe was broached, its contents secured, and nobody knows to this day how the Chancellor managed to escape.

Brand's people were in the house, and the yacht, with open gangways, lay helpless upon the roof when three electrical aerial destroyers of the Fleet pounced down to effect her capture. She sounded the recall, and gained some precious moments in parley, but still escape was impossible, for the destroyers had every weapon trained at point-blank range. The last men gained their quarters on board, the port clanged home, a bell sounded, and then in haste the destroyers opened fire. To their amazement and horror they saw the yacht for an instant poise in the moonlight, then change as they supposed into a blur of quivering vapour and totally disappear, leaving the shell-struck roof a mass of flames.

Brand said afterwards that guardsmen and sailors alike were seasick as she rose, circled round Buckingham Palace, then flashed down on Holloway Prison. "It was a near thing," he confessed, "and I almost killed one of my engineers. His heart stopped beating and the surgeon had some trouble in pulling him round." There was panic in the courtyard at

Holloway, sharp explosions rang out here and there, while some cased ammunition blew the store room to pieces, raining showers of bricks into the courtyard. Despite all resistance, two prisoners were taken from the cells, and like a steel projectile, the yacht flashed homeward, delivering Sydney and Browne upon one of the Palace towers. Brand left the yacht, which drove away some destroyers and poised in the high air on guard. Until dawn, the master was at work in an office set apart for him on the frontage overlooking the Mall.

Since midnight the Palace had been ringing with the noise of preparation for war. A single breath from great artillery would sweep the fairy-fragile walls into white dust, but two hundred gentlemen of the Guard thought otherwise. In the dead of night, transport wagons were taken from the royal garage, and under escort entered the silent metropolis. Warehouses were forced, weapons, provisions and forage were taken in the Queen's name, and the supplies brought back to the Palace. There the tanks were filled, the non-combatants discharged. The outward-facing windows were barricaded to resist musketry, the re-entrants loopholed for machine carbines, the salients turned into bastions commanding the curtains, and each door guarded with a small earthwork.

On the level roof of one of the Palace towers the Queen watched the red dawn break, the red dawn of the Terror. Her ladies had been crying in the bedchamber, and she had cried too. They were all gone now save Miss Temple, the governess, who had been openly mutinous and rude to the Duke of

Gloucester, Captain of the Guard. Now the Court Chaplain waited in his vestry not daring to proceed with the early service, because Miss Temple was in possession of the chapel, where she knelt protesting aloud before the Altar.

The Queen was alone upon her tower, kneeling with her arms thrown out upon the balustrade, watching the red sun light the domes and the spires of the Capital. The sun swung upwards, the little white clouds swept merrily overhead, the Palace resounded with sharp commands, the rolling of gun wheels, and the tramp of men, while sometimes through a momentary silence came the song of the birds and whispering of the trees. Margaret's head fell softly on her arm, and kneeling on the cold, white stones, she slept, and sleeping dreamed that once again she walked amid long aisles of chestnut trees in the garden at Hampton Court. She walked with the gaunt old governess hand in hand, talking of days to come, and the courtly splendour of a stainless reign. Miss Temple was to be Archbishop of Canterbury, the nation was to rest under the ancient shadow of the Holy Church, women were to be forbidden to smoke or ride cycles, bachelors were to be shut out from public office, music halls were to be entirely devoted to the meetings of missionaries. Then Mr. Brand came wandering up the avenue, his yacht at heel like a dog, and he was remarking, with a pleasant smile, that it was all quite simple with etheric power, but would she be pleased to wake up. In vain her protests, for he told her she must wake up, she must, she must wake up.

She did awake with a start to find beside her

a tall lad in a canvas suit, grimy from head to foot.

"Oh, Tom," she cried, "go and wash. You, a Prince!" She yawned daintily as she rose to her feet. "You example to the British public! Oh, you disgrace!"

"A nice sort of Queen you make sleeping on the tiles like a cat. But I say, Meg, won't it be fun if they do attack! Gloucester's giving me a machine-gun, north-east salient. Oh, it's glorious!"

"Do be cautious, Tom, you know you're next to the throne."

"Keep the throne to yourself, I don't want it! Tommy of Lancaster with a crown! Bah, it doesn't look good enough. I say, won't you have some food? I'll send my servant up with a tray. You needn't come down; you'd get in our way downstairs."

"I'm very hungry," said the Queen; "but is there any food?"

"Plenty," said the Duke of Lancaster; "I'll send some up. By the way, that man from Lyonesse wants to have audience."

The Queen's face darkened and the young prince laughed.

"Ah, you see through him at last; I'm so glad. Margaret, the regiment hates him. I'll send him up and just you give him fits. If you want him shot give me first chance; now do, Meg. I'd love to riddle a man."

"Go away, go away, Tom, or I'll have you arrested for cheek."

The young prince snatched a kiss, and fled rejoicing.

Troops of the Government had already cinctured the Palace with a cordon of steel ; and as the Queen waited scraps of talk came drifting up from the guarded walls, chaff of the besiegers, rallies of the besieged.

Through the dark hours fear had come to Margaret, her thought was haunted by the Master of Lyonesse, her very dreams invaded. The fear was too intangible for control, too great to fight. His presence had driven her to refuge from him on the highest tower, but even here she felt that, far above, his yacht hung on guard in the thin spaces of the air. Again and again she had fought back the tears which would come despite all her courage ; but now, conscious that her face was drawn and white, and sorrow stained, and deeply lined, she found herself, woman-like, trying to be neat before the master should see her. In anger and in dread she waited for him at whose word the great world-storm had broken loose to drive her like a withered leaf whither she could not guess and dared not think. He would come with his quaint friendliness, strong and at ease, would sit upon that balustrade and swing his legs like a boy, talking of huge Powers as the counters of his game, though nations reeled under the blows he dealt and millions of men died for the words he spoke. She could hear his tread upon the stairs, could feel his rough presence as he crossed the pavement. She braced herself with an effort to face him, then turned and saw Brand as no one ever did before, haggard and ghastly, utterly broken down. He had come to her in weakness for sympathy, for comfort, and all the fierce, vindictive words which she had

prepared for his confusion passed from her mind forgotten.

"It is done," he said faintly; "all done," and at the sound of his voice she shrank away in loathing. "All done,"—he sank down upon a stone seat against the balustrade—"and now the Queen may rest."

She looked across the great town southwards, and from far off came sounds of distant tumult. And then in passionate reproach she echoed—

"Rest? Stand up and see." The words came harsh from her throat. "See what you have done!"

He stood up and his slow glance went outward from sylvan parks and tree-girt palaces to long-drawn lines of bright-hued garden roofs, sky-piercing domes, and sun-gilt monuments, a valley of terraced buildings, stone-clad hills, heights overflowed, and towered heights beyond, suburbs which rivalled Babylon and Rome, and still no visible limits bounded London. Ships beat the clear air with unnumbered wings, yachts from the suburbs, aerial liners home from distant towns, and far above the grim destroyers soared. So fared the illustrious Capital of the world just at the last end of the electric age. The momentary tumult had died away.

"How quiet it is," he said, looking down to the streets; "and all the poor folk must think that the last trumpet has sounded, that this is the Day of Judgment."

"Because of your crime and mine," said the Queen, in bitterness. "Oh, why did I listen to you? Why did I attempt to save myself from the Grand Duke at such a price as this!"

"Do not be angry," he answered, resting his elbows on the balustrade. "The big clouds roll up the sky, there's lightning and thunder, a huge, tremendous roar that makes everybody frightened, the rain splashes down and smokes up, the drenched earth quivers and steams—and then we all feel much better, and the Chariot of the Sun shines high in Heaven."

She turned in coldness from him. "I have seen," she said.

"And I have seen," he answered, wearily. "So Ulster sent his troops to guard the Palace? That was thoughtful of him." He leaned heavily upon the balustrade and turned a wan face, smiling. "I have seen Ulster make me a poor man this morning. He has three hundred million sterling now to help the people through this trouble: he will save me a deal of work. I have seen him capture my transports laden with food, my stores and warehouses of provisions, my two thousand bread shops which were to open this morning. He kindly undertakes the work of feeding eighty million people for me. If a few millions go hungry now is it my fault that I gave, or Ulster's blame that he stole?"

"Only a few millions!" the Queen moaned. "Oh, horrible! horrible! Only a few millions dying of hunger because of your crime and mine."

"Nay," he answered, gently; "because Ulster has taken the food I gave to the people. But for that seizure, no man need have starved. They will understand. All night I have been busy that the world might understand. To the newspapers I have dispatched the story of what I have done. First the

people will read Lord Sydney's deposition as to his father's treason, and the papers secured in proof. Then they will read in facsimile those Russian papers, showing in Ulster's writing how he betrayed his country. Next comes the story of my vengeance against a disloyal Government, my gift to a betrayed nation, and finally there is the Queen's own passionate appeal to her people."

Brand laughed a little. "Ulster set a trap, and the jaws have closed not on the Queen, not on the Queen's servant. I think I see Ulster's legs in the trap. What will the people say of this Chancellor who is an agent of Russia, who has divulged the Formula of the Fleets, torn up the British Constitution, and dared to levy war against the Queen's Majesty? By attacking me he has beggared all his capitalists. By seizing my gift he has to feed eighty million of his enemies. I think that Ulster may be safely left to the people."

"But," said the Queen, doubtfully, "the Navy and yonder troops obey the Government."

"From force of habit," Brand laughed easily, "and in the end some will side with the Lord Protector, some with their sovereign. Even if they attack I have but to give one signal to my yacht."

"And the Chancellor is caught in the trap he set for you!" Margaret's voice rang with triumph now, though her eyes were glittering with tears, as turning to Brand she seized him by the hands. "At last I understand, at last I know. Can you forgive me all my doubts? Tell me,"—she seemed to plead for his full confidence—"what shall I do?"

"Wait," he said, earnestly. "For time is on

the Queen's side, and every day will weaken Ulster's following. The Queen has appealed to her people and they will reply. Wait, the Queen is at war with Ulster, not with the nation, and any movement now means bloodshed. Englishmen are not so easy to rear that we should waste them."

"And we have strength to wait?"

For answer he pointed upwards to the heavens, while the Queen watched him, wondering and afraid.

"There's something supernatural here," she whispered. "Hope has come back to the earth, and only an hour ago I could see nothing but blind destruction. You have faith?"

"Faith?" He bowed his head. "Yes, faith in God most pitiful—faith in my Lady Margaret of England—faith in this country, always very great in moments of danger. We are a masterful race. Even Ulster strikes bravely in his peril, strikes out like a man and fights hard. It has given me a new faith in Englishmen to find him such a strong enemy."

The Queen looked down at the long lines of the investing troops, and the midsummer sun shone on her wavy hair. The face of Margaret at rest was surely the saddest face in all the world. Her loathing and terror of the man was gone for ever.

"We must not think," said Brand, "that Ulster is beaten yet. I feel that he has other weapons, other resources; I cannot guess where the next blow will fall, but he strikes hard, with rare confidence in his strength."

"Yesterday," she said, and there was a little quiver about her lips, "I was Queen of England."

"And to-morrow," he answered, "you will be Empress of the World."

"And yet," she went on, "I have misgivings—everything changes so quickly that I am bewildered."

"Yesterday I was my own master, at least I thought so; but now——" He looked at the Queen's face and his eyes became very bright. "Ah, yes, it is all written up on the mess-room walls—

> 'I swear
> To reverence the Queen as if she were
> My conscience, and my conscience as the Queen.'

Oh, how the words took hold of me this morning, as I saw them written on the walls."

His face became almost beautiful as he looked at the Queen, he spoke as one inspired, and all his heart went out with the solemn words of the code of honour. He knelt at the Queen's feet, he took the Queen's hands in his, and looking up into her wondering eyes he repeated—

> 'To love one maiden only, cleave to her
> And worship her with years of noble deeds
> Until I win her.'

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret of England, the God I worship gave me etheric power. I thought I was omnipotent, but I made mistakes, terrible blunders, thinking I could do all the work in a week. I was in such a hurry, full of a boy's pride of service, and look at the horrors I have brought upon the world with my rash haste. What is etheric power compared with the power in a woman's eyes? I don't know how it is, but I see everything so clearly now, and all

my power is nothing—nothing whatever in the eyes of the Queen. I suppose I must be in love. Am I in love ? "

" You mustn't," gasped the Queen, " it's not allowed. The Queen is not allowed to be a woman."

He laughed, kissing her hands as he spoke. " Not if I conquer the world and lay it at the feet of the Queen ? "

" I don't know," Margaret smiled sadly. " I must ask my governess, and she will say, there are no precedents in the book of etiquette. We must be good and serve England."

" England ! " he cried, gazing into the Queen's eyes. " I love you, England. Isn't that allowed ? "

" Not if you put it that way, Mr. Brand. England is not a woman, but a country."

" Bounded on the east by a man's love, and on the west by a man's hope, and on the north by a man's fears, and on the south by a man's faith."

" But that's not geography, Mr. Brand. Please get up."

" I won't unless you promise to let me love England my own way."

" I can't prevent that," said Margaret, smiling.

XI

THE WORLD-STORM

When Brand made his declaration before the Parliament night had already fallen over Europe, and although it was still broad day in the New World, the banks and exchanges were for the most part closed.

But out beyond the Pacific another dawn had flamed along the Kamschatkan volcanoes, the rose flush glowed upon the snows of Fuji, a land breeze awakened the dreaming Eastern Isles, a level sun flashed diamonds in the surf of the Barrier Reef, and the bells of Australian cities rang their summons to work and prayer. So it was that the world-storm which gathered in Europe, broke first upon that far-off Commonwealth which stands at the gates of the Daybreak.

In Brisbane and Sydney, in Melbourne and Auckland, the people were at their breakfast-tables when the news' telephones rang the first notes of alarm, and spoke of the fall of gold. "Nothing to fear," said the average bread-winner. "Brand guarantees good money."

Next came the news that the master was chargeable with treason.

"Nothing to fear," said the average Australian.

" Brand will be in gaol and the old money sound as before."

Prudent men called at the bank to withdraw their deposits. Careful housewives laid in a stock of food. There was a heavy run on all the banks, a sharp rise in the price of provisions, a reluctance to give the usual measure for gold, but still no general panic until noon.

" The Queen joins Lyonesse in open war against the Parliament."

They are of the master race, these Australasians, men who have conquered the deserts, law-loving, self-controlled, cautious, not very easily frightened, ready to lay wagers cheerfully on the issues of life and death. But the bread-winner will fight like a wild beast in defence of his wife and his children. The coinage was discredited, Brand's labour money might become waste paper.

" Get food while money still has power to buy ! "

The rich besieged the banks, and prosperous people bought loads of provisions for cash, not caring what they paid. The shops of the butchers, grocers, and bakers were thronged with customers begging to be served. Still there was decency and order, a cheery confidence that the storm would pass, and the taking of heavy odds against Lyonesse.

" Brand's private yacht has defeated three destroyers."

Etheric power ! These people had been familiar

with Brand's ships for years, bolts of wrought steel, propelled by etheric engines, which could flash through high space at two hundred miles an hour. They were not armed, but suppose that he used them as rams against the fragile, electric battle fleets? Lord Ulster had levied war against etheric power!

Then men went mad. In the rush for food women were crushed to death, and many persons who had secured provisions, were set upon and robbed by criminals. Shops were plundered, armouries were sacked, the police were overwhelmed. Then aerial destroyers fired on the mob.

Sweeping away all values attached to money, with every hour the stress of panic spread. A coinage is only the small change of trade, but with its failure all belief in bonds and promises, all savings, all investments were dishonoured. The rich were bankrupted, the poor thrown out of work, the shops were closed, traffic was suspended, private and public credit alike were shattered. By the third day the Government of the Commonwealth had fallen, and men went armed to guard their families.

At the first motion of the storm, the Australasian bankers sent out their plea for help. The Phillipines and Japan were already appealing, and the cry of the islands awakened Asia. But there was no help. Bravely the Chinese merchants faced the crisis when their time was come, and honourably met their obligations. Malaya awakened, Burmah, India, Persia, Siberia were swept from end to end; and so in the wake of the sun the storm swept on, travelling at a thousand miles an hour, gathering momentum

every moment until it fell like the crash of doom along the length of Africa, across the breadth of Europe.

The break of day found Europe under arms, the aerial fleets on patrol, troops holding the towns. The exchanges, banks, and provision stores were attacked, the doors of them sealed and under guard of sentries. No work could be done, no wage could be earned, traffic ceased, the channels of news were closed. The world-storm struck the East with a fever, a raving delirium, the West with paralysis. In Russia, Germany, and France there began from that time a condition of living death, and afterwards in many a muddy street guardsmen who visited Berlin, saw crops of grass.

On that first day the storm went roaring by leaving Europe shaken, and striking the coasts of America in the full height of its fury. However sound its finance, no nation can stand alone, and in the general bankruptcy of all the world, the great Republic fell. They say that the new metropolis on Manhattan Island is even more stupendous than that which was burned, but still in the negro states of the Mississippi, the ploughs are driven through fields of human bones, and some of the Mexican silver mines are walled up for fear of pestilence.

It is curious to remember how quiet was London on that first day of the Terror. Here was the calm tract in the centre and vortex of the cyclone.

Wisely the Parliament had declared a Bank Holiday. Places of business were closed, the traffic had an easy holiday gait, the parks were thronged, and even the public meetings were not stormy.

In the fortified Palace our Lady's servants had time to sleep after a hard night's work. Her Majesty was not seen, Mr. Brand was supposed to be transacting business in his office in the east front. Prince Ali was a prisoner in the guard-room, charged with treason. My Lord Sydney walked in the stable court with Mr. Browne. Some rumours went about that the captain of the Bodyguard, His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, had a letter from the Dictator. Another rumour was spread that nearly all Mr. Brand's ships had been captured. Lying in various cities throughout the world, to receive and discharge their cargo, more than a hundred of these vessels had been arrested on behalf of the Government. Still the yacht, *Mary Rose*, hung glittering in the heavens like a star, and by aerial telegraph kept the master in contact with affairs.

Late in the afternoon a drenching shower of rain burst over London, with one great ringing peal of thunder.

Miss Temple would have us believe that this was the last trumpet sounding the call to judgment.

The Russian papers were now in all men's hands that they might consider her Majesty's quarrel, also Brand's proposals were known, and how his gift was withheld from reaching the people. And it was well understood that the Parliament, in fighting Brand, had caused all the money in the world to be dishonoured, so that neither the currency of the nations nor that of Lyonesse could be accepted as any measure of value. The leaders of public opinion, journals, clubs, societies, cities, fortresses, and

colonies throughout the Empire were hourly declaring for the Queen.

The rich were on the Duke of Ulster's side, scouting the idea that he had betrayed us to Russia. The poor were with the Queen and Lyonesse. On the whole the fleets and armies obeyed the departments as usual; but rather than attack our Lady, or slaughter their countrymen, soldiers and sailors alike were ripe for mutiny.

Ulster was innocent until his guilt was proved; the nation wanted, even for him, fair play, a trial at law. We islanders are slow to kindle, and neither party desired civil war. So the day closed.

But with the second day, all England knew that trial at law was denied us, or even trial by battle. The deadlock remained and was forgotten. For how could any man remember that the Empire was betrayed, or so much as think of internecine war amid that beggary of the human Race? That was not to be salved by public holidays, or cured by politics, or stayed by war. The first necessity of life is food, and a merchant will not part with his good provisions for any quantity of bogus money.

At first we were all quite confused, storming the banking houses, which solemnly dealt out waste coin and waste paper to hungry customers. Or we thought to rescue our invested savings, and our stock-brokers screamed themselves hoarse trying to sell out shares in mines gone bankrupt, or the bonds of governments already fallen. We had nothing to sell but pieces of paper; we got their exact value back in scraps of paper. We began to understand that we were ruined.

There was no money. People came to the railway stations offering jewels or watches to pay their fares out of London. Then the trains stopped running, and they were rich who had yachts or carriages to make their escape to the country. From noon on the second day to the evening of the third, some thirty hours, the main roads were crowded with fugitives, and when some broken carriages blocked the way, the lanes on either side were overrun. Long afterwards the roads to the country were littered with the wreckage of that flight, in wagons overturned, in piles of broken furniture, in baggage thrown away, and household treasures, or here and there some shattered, trampled body of a man.

And the poor remained in London.

Now we had come face to face with the first law, "Adapt yourselves or die." Some of us adapted ourselves to the new conditions, but for those who failed—— A few days later one began to notice a faint, sickly smell in the streets, and when the air was still, a thin, white mist hanging above the roofs. This bred the pestilence. For there was famine such as had never been known in human annals, famine in the midst of a great abundance.

It must not be thought that there was any lack of food either in London or the provinces. Brand had seen to it.

At the beginning many families laid in stores of victuals, filled their water tanks, fortified their homes, and gallantly defended themselves by force of arms. The big employers kept their servants alive by daily issue of rations, and that long after they suspended work. The Government issued free

rations for all those who were strong enough to fight their way to the depôts, and get off home again without being killed. The farmers and fishermen brought in supplies which they traded for works of art and precious merchandise, for land and houses. These men became very rich.

There was plenty of food, but after the Government fell three-fifths of the whole supply was lost by pillage and burning. The fire brigade was helpless for lack of water; the police and the troops were withdrawn, dispersed, or massacred.

We were reduced to the strangest shifts and expedients for money. Coins passed according to size and weight, as pence, halfpence and farthings. Thus, four sovereigns made an ounce, or penny, which would buy a small roll of bread. Ounces of tobacco, brass checks representing goods in storage, medals, gems, blankets, were common tokens of barter. A revolver cartridge would buy four ounces of meat.

We lacked one old resource of former troubles—horseflesh. There were a few horses owned by rich men; but motor carriages did all the traction, and one cannot eat dynamos. It was curious, too, that panic of the naturalists concerning the Zoological Gardens. Many of the animals condemned for soup—the lions and tigers, for instance, were the last surviving examples of species and orders now wholly extinct. Thousands of starved Londoners protested concerning the lions—the British Lions.

Twenty years have gone by since then, and God has touched our hair with silver in token of the eternal peace to come. And still in the deeps of the night the memory breaks into our dreams, and

lifts us broad awake with a scream of horror. Yet, would we part with that dread remembrance? No, not for worlds!

How sweet it is in memory once again, to walk those old streets of the lost Capital, to see once more the faces of that time, of men brought near to Heaven in their pain, of women glorified by suffering, and little children waiting patiently for the end. We never hoped to live, we rarely cared, for hope was dead in many a smiling face. Fear was dead, too; there was nothing to be afraid of, except life. Men spoke very gently when they met, women would purse their lips and hurry on. One got so used and inured to horrors that the environment of death was no more to be thought of than the air we breathed.

One saw so many deeds of sacrifice, so many saintly and heroic actions, that these made the framework to one's thoughts of life.

So is the memory sweet of those embittered days when, grim confused wars racked all the peoples of the earth; those days of famine, pillage, massacre, of wasting pestilence, and flaming desolation. Heaven and hell were opened, but men looked upward.

XII

THE THIRD DAY

On the third day the Primate called the whole nation to fasting, humiliation, and prayer. At St. Paul's Cathedral the Litany was to be read ; and when the great bell began to toll his minutes over the Capital our Lady said she would attend that service.

For by this time the press had spoken in no uncertain voice. A newspaper is, indeed, like a lens, a burning glass condensing the thought of the people into one clear flame of utterance.

The clear flame had fallen upon the Lord Protector and his Parliament, the nation waited for the Queen to strike, and she did well to trust the poor who loved her.

So, dressed in deep mourning, and attended only by Miss Temple, our Lady drove out through the gates in an open carriage. She would have no body-guard, save in the protection of the mob. The troops cheered as they opened their lines for her passage, men came uncovered, and begged leave to draw her carriage, and all through the streets she was guarded by crowds of men with a great deal of noise, but much besides of loving reverence.

An attempt to arrest our Lady would have led to grievous trouble for the Government, for the

Dictator's writ had little meaning now, and for the moment it seemed that his rule was come to an end. Without attracting notice, Brand's yacht followed Margaret to St. Paul's.

He sat alone in his office behind the darkened, barricaded windows. A pocket aerograph clicked on the desk before him, message after message flashed down from the yacht by his secretaries, and at times, with the little key throbbing under his finger, he sent instructions back.

Nearly all his ships were captured now, Lyonesse had fallen, and yet he must wait, guarding the sacred person of the Queen until the time was ripe, until the nation called him to strike the Dictator down. He must be ready when the moment came, he must have the full support of the Imperial Fleets, the Armies, the departments, the people's trusted leaders, the functions of the whole administration. The new Government must date from Ulster's fall, leaving no instant of doubt, of anarchy, and, above all, this must be Margaret's Government, no froth upon the waves of revolution. There must be no cry in the streets of Brand's Dictatorship, or any mention of himself at all. His portion was with the ships and factories. But it was hard to wait while his ships were captured, his factories despoiled, his good name marred by this reluctant, torturing, agonizing silence.

He closed the instrument, and lying back in his chair, remained in thought. These three days had sprinkled his hair with silver, aged his strong face, added to the rough power of the man something of

majesty, and there came into his eyes a light that had never shown until he knew the Queen. The vision of her arose before him now, her voice seemed to ring through the quiet room, and his heart went out to her in desire.

Who was he that he should dare to love this child of mail-clad Kings, this mighty Empress in whose august name the very skies were governed, and the sea, and realms and continents of men within the limits of the British Peace? He was a commoner, a tradesman, and yet no difference of rank or station, of wealth or power, eminence, faith, enlightenment, has ever set boundaries to human love. 'Tis the man and the woman who mate, not their condition. Had he not seen the evidence of love in Margaret's face? And to win her he must conquer the whole world.

But he was presently aroused from his enchantment. Already some one had knocked at the door unnoticed, and now, while with clasped hands he sat before the table, and with uplifted eyes gazed on his mental vision of the Queen, there was a visitor standing within the room. Dimly aware of some impending peril, Brand turned round to find a stranger bowing apologies, a gentleman in civilian dress, yet wearing a turban of banded green and gold, an Oriental, haughty, yet in some queer way, servile.

"You are Prince Ali?" he asked.

"At your service, yes."

"Escaped from the guard-room?"

Prince Ali put a bolder face on his intrusion, went to a chair by the wall, sat down and crossed his legs.

"Before you ring for my guards," he explained, "I have business with you."

Brand smiled at the man's audacity.

"Of course,"—his Highness lighted a cigarette —"you share our common sorrow at this grave crisis?"

"No, sir, we have nothing in common."

"I observe," the Prince laughed, "that the sea-eagle wastes few regrets over a panic of gulls."

"Am I to be one of your eagles, or one of your gulls, Prince Ali?"

"Of the gulls? No." He shrugged his shoulder. "You are King of the air, as I am of India!"

"I supposed," said Brand, gravely, "that her Majesty was Empress of India."

"Was Empress, yes. I see we understand one another."

"I think, my dear Prince, that I follow your meaning. So India finds her opportunity in this crisis? May I venture to ask if you speak on behalf of Russia?"

"I speak," said the other, haughtily, "for India. I speak for the India which has waited ever since 1857."

"For a repetition of the artillery salutes fired by the British in 1858?"

Ali's face darkened with sudden passion. "Your tact, Mr. Brand, is most English. Yes, I have the honour to speak for the India which has waited since the artillery salutes of 1858."

"And how am I to serve you?"

"I come, Mr. Brand, to the future Dictator of the world, not to ask favours, but to confer them."

"Indeed, you are too kind. Go on, sir."

"I must warn you first that Lyonesse has been captured."

"You don't say so."

"Also that all your ships are taken, save two which are homeward bound, and will be secured on their arrival. Your yacht has gone to the city to guard the ex-Queen. You are helpless in the hands of your enemies. I have come to save you."

"Indeed." Brand reached forward across the desk, and touched an electric bell. "How you escaped from the guard, I don't quite know," he said; "I have rung to inquire."

"Very good," Prince Ali laughed. "I was released and sent here by the Lord Protector's agent, the Duke of Gloucester."

"Really," said Brand, sarcastically; "any further revelations?"

"Yes. The price which Ulster pays for your body, the price he pays to Gloucester, is the throne —the throne of the Empire!"

"Anything more?"

"At all hazards I came to warn you of this trap, and you walk blindly into it. That bell condemns you to death! Quick,"—Prince Ali started to his feet—"there may be time. At the end of this corridor there's a door to the upper terrace— when your yacht comes back you can signal. I can save you yet!"

"Your price?"

"India."

"Sit down, Prince Ali, sit down, I say! Listen to me," said the master, "you first betrayed poor

Ulster to the Russians. Then you betrayed the Queen by this intrigue. Now you would betray the Dictator to me—in order that you may betray your sovereign again, by seizing India. I may have lost my city, my lands and factories, my ships—all that I had, and be here, helpless, at Ulster's mercy."

He looked up at the windows with their loopholed barricades, swung round to face the door from which there was no escape, then turned on Ali of Haidar.

"By the living God, I swear," he cried, "that within a month I'll have you blown from your own guns at the gates of Delhi!"

Rising from his chair, he seized the aerograph and signalled to his yacht for instant succour.

"Die, then!" said the Prince; "here's the death of a dog for you!"

He clapped his hands as though in the Eastern manner calling a servant. Then the door swung open and Gloucester, Captain of the Guard, strode into the room.

He seemed astonished, this old, grizzled soldier—over-astonished.

"Trooper Ali!"

The trooper rose and saluted.

"Who let you out of the guard-room?"

The trooper turned his slow gaze on Brand, and Gloucester, following the direction of his eyes—

"Mr. Brand," he cried, "have you harboured this prisoner?"

Now, Brand was sitting with the aerograph upon his knee signalling rapidly for help. Gloucester's very presence was ignored by this commoner.

"Mr. Brand!" He spoke imperatively. "Mr. Brand!"

The master glanced up with one eye. "Well," he asked. "What's the matter with you?"

"You forget yourself!"

"Not at all. I observe that Prince Ali claps his hands to call a servant. The servant appears, and does well to stand awaiting my orders. You may go." Brand dearly loved a fight.

The Duke flushed scarlet. "Sir, you insult me!"

"If it is possible," said Brand. "Were you listening outside, or did you wear felt slippers? I should have heard you in that paved corridor."

The Duke struck Brand across the face. The American remained perfectly still in his seat, laughing slightly, but otherwise unmoved.

"Thank you," he said; "exactly what I wanted. Shall it be swords or revolvers?"

"This is ridiculous; I cannot stoop to fight a commoner."

"Your Royal Highness prefers to be publicly thrashed?"

"I am commandant of this fortress!"

"Of course," said the master, quietly; "so you struck the Queen's guest."

"You are my prisoner!"

"Well," Brand laughed, "that gets you off all right—don't have to fight when you're frightened."

The Duke was beside himself with rage. "Now you're trying to back out! You shall fight me, sir! You shall fight!"

Mr. Brand rose. "Then," he said, "name your weapons."

So Gloucester, instead of delivering Brand a prisoner to the Lord Protector, must give the delay and the courtesies of a duel.

But Prince Ali understood. "Allow me," he said graciously; "sir, as a witness to this quarrel, may I venture——"

"Well, what have you got to say?" Gloucester was on dangerous ground, and seeing the position, the American intervened. "Look here, gentlemen, this situation is too damned delicate for a plain man. What passes between her Majesty's Commandant and a prisoner charged with high treason —well, I'm not a party to the conversation—so I'm going to clear out."

Gloucester shrank back aghast, for he saw that he had been entrapped again by his antagonist.

"As Mr. Brand remarks," said Prince Ali, with a low bow, "we are both prisoners, and her Majesty's command is that we must be delivered to Lord Ulster."

Gloucester drew a deep breath of relief. "Sir," —he faced Mr. Brand—"I shall be ready to meet you when you are free to fight. For the moment——"

He strode to the door, and gave a rapid command to his orderly, who was waiting in the corridor.

He turned back again into the room, leaving the door wide open.

"I have summoned the main guard," he said. "I shall deliver you prisoner to the Lord Protector."

At this moment a shadow darkened the room, the light no longer streamed through the loopholes

of the barricades. One would have thought that a cloud had passed over the sun, but for a shrill whistle sounding without, and a heavy clang of steel.

"Call the main guard," said the American, derisively.

With a deafening crash the barricades which filled the window fell down in splintered masses to the floor. Outside lay the great steel hull of the *Mary Rose*, the doors in her side flung open, her gangway lowered upon the balcony. Upon the gangway were a company of sailors grounding a heavy beam, with which they had forced the window. An officer brought them to the salute with drawn cutlasses.

"Now, Duke," said Brand, "hand over your sword."

But even while he spoke there came a rush of men at the double, troopers of the guard, who presently formed up within the room.

"Surrender your yacht," cried Gloucester. "She is commanded with machine guns from every salient of the main front."

"At the first shot," said Brand, "I shall blow up every cartridge in the Palace, and explode every loaded gun. Call your Guardsmen to lay down their carbines, lest they be blown to pieces."

Gloucester laughed at the threat, but Trooper Lord Sydney stood forward at the salute.

"Sir, Mr. Brand speaks the truth. He released me from gaol by this mysterious power of the ship."

Through the silence which followed there came a burst of cheering, the noise of a multitude of

people who were attending her Majesty from St. Paul's Cathedral.

"Your Royal Highness," said Brand; "you found me closeted with Prince Ali. You charge me with treason against our Lady?"

"Yes."

"To our Lady, and to her only, will I yield myself prisoner."

The Duke flushed at the generosity which saved him from exposure as Ulster's agent. He bowed in assent and remained silent.

"If a man moves without my consent," said the American, "I shall destroy the Palace. But you may send one messenger to the Queen."

A messenger was sent, who presently came to her Majesty, finding her hurt and angry that the main guard should not be in attendance to give her welcome.

But before she appeared, Mr. Brand walked to the gangway of the yacht and in a low voice bade her commander await further orders at Tower Hill. Turning, he came back to his place in the middle of the room.

Her Majesty stood in the doorway, and to her the Duke of Gloucester made his accusation against the Master of Lyonesse, telling how he had been found in privacy with Prince Ali of Haidar, and how he had resisted arrest until she came.

Mr. Brand walked with bowed head to the Queen, and kneeling upon one knee, looked up in her face.

"My Queen," he murmured, his voice inaudible to all but her. "I am plotting to outwit a deeper

treachery. Let me be prisoner here with a trusted man to guard me until you can come to-night. Send overtures to Ulster, and promise to hand me over."

"How can I believe you?" said the Queen, but her speech lacked force. How could she even pretend to distrust Brand now!

"Oh, play the part," he whispered, "so much depends."

"You have deceived me, I cannot trust you." But her voice was only a murmur without force.

"Oh, be stronger, be stronger," he pleaded, seizing her hand.

"I will not hear another word," she cried.

"You shall, you shall." His voice rose high in supplication. "You must hear me before it is too late."

She drew back astonished, but could not find another word to say.

"Oh, be brave, little Queen," he whispered, passionately kissing her hand.

"Gloucester!" Margaret called across the room; "hold Mr. Brand a prisoner here in this room. Let nobody come near or speak to him. Put a trustworthy man here to guard him."

The Duke selected a man, his own orderly, but the Queen looked from face to face until she saw one that she fully trusted.

"Lancaster!"

Tom of Lancaster stood forward at the salute.

"I place you on guard," said the Queen.

Then Mr. Brand went over to Lord Sydney.

" Gloucester is disloyal," he whispered, " guard the Queen."

Suddenly her Majesty gave a startled cry. " You said Prince Ali was here with Mr. Brand. Where is Prince Ali ? "

Under cover of the general confusion Prince Ali had escaped from the Palace.

XIII

THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER

Mr. Brand was seated at the office desk, his hands clasped before him as though in prayer. A sentry paced slowly up and down in the corridor, another trooper stood with carbine at support upon the balcony.

Presently Mr. Brand rose, and walked slowly across the room towards the window, whereupon his warder turned with a startled gesture. The prisoner saw that he was but a lad, shy and comely.

"Don't be uneasy," said Mr. Brand; "I give you my parole not to attempt escape."

"You'd better not," remarked the sentry; "I'd like the chance of a shot."

"Large game, eh?"

"Rather!"

"Don't you wish you were out there, fighting the rioters?"

"I don't fancy battues," drawled the trooper; "but you're game, and in season."

"The Palace seems quite unguarded now. All the troops are gone."

"Two squadrons of the Guard are quite enough," said the sentry, "even to hold John Brand."

"So you think I'm guilty."

"Yes, sir."

"Even before the trial?"

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Brand. But if you are guilty I hope I'll be in the firing party."

"It is good," said the prisoner, gravely; "that the Queen has loyal men. If the Queen finds me guilty, I shall beg you may be one of the firing party."

"Thanks, awfully," said the sentry. "But if you don't mind, I shall get into trouble if I'm caught talking."

"One word more. May I know your name. In case——"

"Lancaster," said the sentry.

"Lancaster," muttered the prisoner, with a slight lift of one eyebrow as he turned back towards his chair.

"Would you like the window shut?"

"Thank you, sir," said Brand, and he fell to thinking.

Midnight was striking when he was suddenly aroused by the Queen's presence. The flutter of her draperies, the scent of roses, the sight of her swift grace caught at his senses. The piercing sweetness of her seized at his heart, arrested his breath—and then the touch of her hand upon his shoulder kept him from rising.

"Is it true?" she cried to him under her breath. "Is it true? Lord Sydney tells me that if you had stayed in your yacht, gathered your ships, fought the Fleet, hanged the Lord Protector——"

"And been a traitor, eh?" he continued, smiling.

"You could have conquered the world?"

"Yes, I suppose so." He rattled the handcuffs

which bound his wrists, and laughed. "Of course I could—oh, any time these ten years past until I became the Queen's prisoner. Conquered the world? What was the good of that?"

"And you a prisoner!"

Hurriedly she unlocked the handcuffs and released him, then as he rose and stretched his cramped arms—

"You are my world," he laughed. "A woman's love is all the world to a man. Do you want the earth? I'll conquer that and lay it at your feet, if you'll only let me feel the touch of your hand again. And now you're angry! You were just as angry the first time we met, and the second time, and the third—you looked most glorious of all that third time! Warn Margaret of danger and she gets furious, the greater the peril the more royal her rage—the fighting blood all roused before I can speak of peril. What man ever had the courage of the Queen?"

"Oh!" she laughed, trying to rub away the sudden flush with her white fingers. "Everything's so different now. Tell me."

"The same rose, the same thorns—I daren't!"

"Oh, please tell me."

"There's treason inside the Palace."

"Oh, surely not!"

"The Lord Protector has bribed the Captain of the Guard."

"Gloucester? Impossible!"

"He has been offered the throne."

"Oh, think of what you are saying! My own dear cousin, my friend."

"He released Prince Ali, sent him to trap me

into some avowal of treason. He was actually listening outside the door. He tried to hand me over to Ulster."

"And that's why I found the main guard here in this room. And Prince Ali's escape!" Margaret sank into a chair, her white lips drawn with pain. "Guilty," she murmured. "Guilty! Oh, thank God that you are not condemned to this throne. The lessons are so hard to learn—so hard! The Queen must never believe in anybody, she must never even have a friend, she must be all alone in the world. Yet,"—she looked with troubled eyes at his face—"I must believe in some one, or go mad. I cannot bear this solitude, this lonely state, this majesty of pain. I'm only a poor girl robbed of all I love."

His hand stole out and rested tenderly on hers. "Poor child," he whispered.

"Yes, I was wrong,"—her eyes were misty with tears. "Yes, I believe in you, dear friend. When you pray will you remember Margaret?"

Oh, Hands of God, deal with her tenderly! So we prayed for Margaret in those days, when Hands of white flame were burning the evil out of us all, guiding us towards the end. One must be brave to follow where God leads, patient to recognize Him in our agony, faithful to know that pain is the Gate of Heaven.

"I will remember Margaret," said Brand; "and if you need a friend, there is Sydney. You will trust Sydney?"

"Ulster's son!"

"Yes," he said, thinking aloud. "I doubt if there is another man now living who would come

stainless through a trial like his. To save his country he sacrificed his own father, he threw away the reputation of his house, his personal self-respect, his wealth, his career, everything he valued, everything he hoped for. He struck the first blow to save the Empire—and I know how he counted the cost. The events of this time will never be forgotten while the earth lasts, and when our descendants want a new proverb of manhood, they'll swear by Sydney's honour."

"I'm glad to hear you speak like that," said Margaret.

"And when I am gone you'll depend on him for advice."

"When you have gone! You're not going to leave me!"

"Yes. Your only danger is that you shelter me. The people are on your side, and Ulster dare not attack you."

"He sent envoys to-day." The Queen looked down at her foot, which made little lines to and fro. "If I would only listen," she said, "to my loyal advisers, the slanders against him could be easily disproved. Public confidence would be restored. Parliament would cancel the Act of Deposition, and everything would be lovely, and please would I send Mr. Brand away."

"You promised to hand me over as I said?"

"Yes, as you said."

"You will be safe."

"But the Grand Duke Alexander has arrived. He's in the Palace now. Oh, I'm so frightened. Don't leave me to him!"

" Keep him in the Palace, Ulster will wait, hoping for the Russian Alliance. Russia will wait, hoping for the treaty. Keep them waiting, keep them expectant, but sign nothing, promise nothing, and fear nothing. I'm a prisoner for conspiracy with Prince Ali. I escape, but that's not the fault of the Queen. I make war with the Dictator, but he cannot blame the Queen."

" Oh, don't leave me ! Don't desert me ! "

" If I stay here much longer there's no hope left. Because I could not go out to fight him, he captured Lyonesse and all my ships. He'll have the yacht next."

" Take me away in the yacht."

" Then what becomes of the public confidence ? The people would cry that you had deserted them ; they would overwhelm the Government—then chaos ! The Queen's place is here, setting an example of unflinching courage to all her people."

" But can't you capture the Dictator, and seize the Government now ? "

" With one yacht ? "

Margaret's eyes were dark with horror. " Too late ! "

" Outside this room I am an outlaw and a fugitive, hunted like a wolf. I dare not even call my yacht lest the Queen should be compromised and attacked. I must go to Tower Hill and signal the *Mary Rose.*"

" And you have lost everything in guarding me."

" What was there to fight for if the Queen were lost ? I stayed until I could leave you secure. Now I must fight." He took the aerograph from the

desk. "So far as I can see the Queen is safe, and yet—I will leave you this instrument. If ever you are in danger, release this key and touch it so—three sharp strokes repeated again and again. The signal shall be forwarded by my London agents, and the answer will be four double strokes."

"And you will come?"

"Instantly."

"Mr. Brand, I want to send Gloucester away. He's dangerous."

"Then have him closely watched. Enemies are invaluable, for their every movement is an index of danger to be overcome. Send Gloucester away, and at once the enemy is warned of your policy. That would be fatal."

"Forgive me, dear friend,"—Margaret hid her white face in her hands trying to stop the tears—"I have been such a coward while you are so brave! Yes, I will stay as a woman always must, while the men go out to fight."

"And after this," he said, wistfully; "knowing how weak I am for the Queen's defence, you will still depend on me, still trust me?"

She threw her head back, gazing upon him steadfastly for a minute, her eyes half closed.

"I must be a fool," she said, between tears and a terrible broken-hearted laughter. "You came to me and talked about things I don't understand, can't understand, don't want to understand. I only believe! I was an Empress, you were Mr. Brand—now you're the wind, and I'm a leaf in autumn. Trust you? Depend on you? Yes, I do!" Her face became radiant, her eyes full of light. "You

serve me through disgrace and outlawry, you're ruined like I am, fallen, a broken man, and yet stronger, greater than ever, because nothing can frighten you. Don't look at me—your eyes fascinate me—I hardly know what I'm saying——" she reached out her arms to him. "I am become blind, led only by your eyes. Go and save England!"

The room was nearly dark, for only a small lamp burned dimly on the desk, but now a great red glare came in through the window space, and shone in flickering radiance on the wall. Out of the distance rose an awful murmur, the swelling volume of harsh-throated riot, the crackle of musketry, the shouts of men.

"Mr. Brand," said the Queen, "I dare not let you go. The streets are dangerous, you never could reach the Tower."

"I must go disguised."

"What disguise could save you? Ah, yes—I see—the officers of my Guard. They can go anywhere!"

"Give me a strong horse, Queen, and the uniform of an officer of the Guard."

"An officer can't ride, Mr. Brand, without an orderly."

"Give me that lad outside the window there. I like him."

"My cousin, the Duke of Lancaster," said the Queen. "You have chosen well. Bring him here, Mr. Brand."

The American crossed the room, opened the window, and summoned the sentry, who made his salute to the Queen.

"Tom," said our Lady, "do you love me?"

He knelt and kissed her hand. "Quick, Tom," said the Queen. "Order two horses, the best we have, and bring an officer's harness for Mr. Brand, use this,"—she gave him her signet ring. "Take brevet rank as subaltern, and if you live, I'll confirm it. Now run!"

His Royal Highness looked sideways at the American, then sideways at the Queen, then, with a malicious understanding chuckle, was gone like a flash.

The Queen sat thinking. "There is danger still," she said presently. "The destroyers are patrolling everywhere, and your yacht on her way to the Tower was chased by the Channel Fleet just come from Portsmouth. Instead of running, she rose up high, soaring miles into the air. The Fleet could not follow because no man could breathe up yonder. But they say the yacht must come down, so they have scattered out to watch. Must she come down?"

"Not till I want her."

"What are your plans?" she asked presently.

"To get the yacht," he answered, "bring the Fleet to terms, recapture Lyonesse, collect my squadron, find my Ministers of State, and weld them into a strong Cabinet. Then I hope to hang Ulster, seize the departments, set up the Queen's provisional Government, call a General Election, and declare war with the Allies. Meanwhile the Queen must keep our enemies amused."

"But if you die in the Queen's service?"

He laughed. "They'll throw my body into a ditch and cry, 'So perish all the Queen's enemies!'"

Turning to the table she wrote upon a slip of paper—

"The bearer is my Messenger.

"Margaret R.I."

"Kneel," she said, gravely, and he bent his knee to the ground. "This is a token of our love and trust."

He glanced at the paper. "I can't take that, dear Queen. It might compromise you; it's too dangerous." He would have risen.

"No, don't get up yet."

The Duke of Lancaster had come in bearing a suit of armour and a cloak.

"Give me your sword, Tom."

The soldier bent his knee and presented the hilt.

"Now," she stood up waving the sword lightly above the master's head, "will you be my true knight?"

The master sank down on both knees, and lifted up his clasped hands.

"Rise," cried the Queen, striking the accolade on his shoulder. "You are too great for any poor titles or dignities of my chivalry, but be my friend, Mr. Brand, and put on the harness of my knights. Staunch champion," her voice broke, "true, loyal friend, there's nothing left for the Queen to do but pray. God save you this wild night, God save and keep you in this fearful war."

He kissed her outstretched hand. "Good-bye, my Queen."

"Good-bye, my champion. Good-bye until we meet in happier times."

And so she swept from the room, and the Guardsman in the corridor who followed at her signal saw that the Queen was crying.

Lancaster served Mr. Brand as squire, assisting him while he changed his civilian clothes for the gold harness and scarlet cloak of an officer of the Guard, the only dress which would give him even a moderate degree of safety in the streets of the town. Brand made not the least pretence to a military bearing, but he was an athlete in habit, and the harness fitted him well. He was thinking too intently to be awkward or self-conscious in disguise, and when at last the trooper brought a big, black stallion into the courtyard, he swung into the saddle with the ease of a horseman. The Prince was less suspicious at the sight of horsemanship.

"Now can you get me a strong lantern?"

Lord Lancaster ran into the Palace, and for a minute the master sat curbing the black stallion, who danced polka movements, uneasy at the delay.

Just before Lord Lancaster came back, a window opened far up in the courtyard wall. Then a white handkerchief fluttered softly down like a snowflake. The master rode forward and caught and fastened it to the front of his helmet.

"Are you ready, sir?" cried Lancaster.

"God save the Queen," said Brand, and they rode out under the archway.

The Queen's ring passed them through the gates, and breaking into a canter side by side, the horsemen swung round the east wing out into the Mall.

The clocks were striking two as they traversed the spacious avenue, now dark and silent.

"Do you still want to shoot me, sir?" asked Brand.

"Drop that '*sir*'," answered the young Prince. "It sounds absurd from you. Call me Lancaster. Forget that nonsense I talked. She trusts you. That's good enough for me."

Abreast of Marlborough House the horses shied violently passing the body of a murdered woman. She lay in her white evening dress, her fair face streaked with blood, and the jewels had been wrenched from her hair and neck.

"That's Mrs. Osbourne," said the trooper, bending down; "I knew her, poor soul."

Just beyond stood her carriage, the chauffeur murdered in his seat, and close beside in the gutter lay some poor rioter who had ceased to starve.

They rode on in silence to the end of that moonlit solitude, and were passing the north edge of the Horse Guards Parade, still under the spell of horror, when a cloud passed across the moon.

"What's that?" cried Lancaster.

Brand looked up, relieved at any interruption to his thoughts. "Only a destroyer cruising—on patrol, I suppose, to keep order."

"Unless," said the trooper, "we're followed."

"An officer and a trooper of the Guard—nonsense!"

"Unless Prince Ali——"

"I see. He would warn the Government to expect my escape. So. This destroyer may think we're chasing Mr. Brand to Tower Hill."

"She's following, anyway."

"We'll have to call her presently to help

us." The master laughed, drawing his cloak about him.

They were in Trafalgar Square now, skirting the edge of a crowd of starving trades unionists, who were easing their feelings with a Republican demonstration. London never dared to sleep in those first nights of the peril.

"I wonder," said the master, as they rode past, "will history blame me for that—thing—back there in the Mall?" His lips were quivering. "Will history make me the murderer?"

"That depends," answered Lancaster, "on what history has to tell of the war that's coming. I wouldn't like to be your ghost if the thing's a failure."

"And if it succeeds, Lancaster, will they make a picture of me among the conquerors, with Alexander, Semiramis, Tamerlane, the Mogul, Napoleon—riding through a lane of stark corpses, and millions and millions of the accusing dead?"

"Wouldn't you rather be there than in a procession to the gallows?"

"I'd rather have the gallows, Lancaster."

The Strand was in darkness, and every theatre was closed. Here and there stood cars, derelict because the drivers had struck. The public houses had been closed by order. Only the churches were open, for although they could not be lighted, great congregations gathered in these nights, for rest and consolation. Indeed, for that relief, even delicate women and children were willing to leave their lightless, desolate homes, and face the risk of being robbed or murdered in the by-ways.

The police patrolled in companies, while now

and again came the tramp of marching men, volunteers or special constables, called out to confront some distant riot ; but no man went abroad unarmed, and few women except under escort. There were not less than forty thousand criminals at large in London, furtive as yet, rather than violent, stealing enough food to prosper, while daily the desperation of the poor added to their numbers, and their leaders grew more powerful and more reckless.

In silence Brand and Lancaster rode on, turning now and again to watch the aerial destroyer, which, beating to and fro in short slants, was evidently keeping watch on their movements. The moon caught her gleaming aeroplanes at every ratch. At any moment she might call out with a request for instructions. Perhaps some doubt restrained her lest these men were not Guardsmen, but fugitives despite their horses and their harness. But, however carefully she might have watched for the master of Lyonesse, however certain it might be that he would head for a rendezvous with the yacht, a mistake would endanger the new compact between Queen and Government. Her Majesty's gentlemen of the Guard could not be insulted with impunity.

" Shall we gallop ? " asked Lancaster.

" No, slower if anything or they'll think we're running away."

So reining to a trot, they went along the Fleet Viaduct, with a passing glance at some sudden riot running wild down in Farringdon Street. They skirted the south side of St. Paul's, and traversed Cannon Street. But then, instead of turning off towards London Bridge, they plunged down the hill

by the Monument into the cobbled alley of Lower Thames Street. The destroyer must have seen that they were actually bound for the Tower, for now she whistled thrice.

"They think we're chasing Brand!" cried Lancaster, and waving his arm signalled the destroyer to follow.

Ahead by the Billingsgate Market lay a fish van overturned, entirely blocking the thoroughfares. So they plunged up hill among lanes and alleys, passing over the body of a murdered policeman, until they emerged by an old church where the congregation was singing the Litany, and came out upon the open space of Tower Hill.

"Give me the lantern," said Brand, as they swept down towards the Tower Gate at a gallop. "I'm going to signal my yacht."

"Then the destroyer will fire—she's close behind!"

"We must take the risk."

He drew rein, and flashed the strong light thrice across the sky.

The destroyer fired a warning shot, but again Mr. Brand flashed the signal, and presently yet again.

"By George!" muttered Lancaster. "We're done for now!"

"Lancaster," said the master, "is there any officer of the Guard at all like me in appearance?"

"There's Captain Talbot, his gear exactly fits you."

"Good. The destroyer will steer close down now. Ride up to her, say Captain Talbot sends you, that Brand's at the Palace, and we've used his

secret signal to lure the yacht. The destroyer's to wait out of sight until Captain Talbot gives orders to attack."

The trooper dashed away up the slope.

"When I raise my hand," the master shouted after him, "ride straight for my yacht."

The warship was slanting down, she sheered barely clear of the housetops, and then hung poised above the trees by the Tower moat.

And now drawing rein after a furious gallop, the trooper faced the suspended warship, so close that his horse reared up in terror.

"Captain Talbot's compliments," he yelled. "Help us to capture Brand's yacht. Lie low and wait!"

"Where's Mr. Brand?" cried the destroyer circling round the terrified horse like an eagle round a mosquito, the faintest airs from the river just whispering under her aeroplanes, and barely strong enough to give her steerage way.

"Brand is in chains at the Palace!" the trooper yelled so that his voice broke in a wail. "Lie low and help us, we're luring the yacht down with Brand's private signal. Captain Talbot will give the order to fire!"

But now the destroyer was so low between the buildings that she lost the air and grounded. It would take her three minutes to rise clear again from the earth, and meanwhile she lay helpless on her keel springs.

"Can't you put out those lights?" yelled the trooper. He was jubilant, for he had put the destroyer out of action.

Nobody knows what the destroyer thought, back there behind the trees of the moat enclosure, but the Captain of the *Mary Rose* spoke afterwards as to the descent of the yacht. She had been at a height of five miles in the air when the electric lantern flashed the summons upwards. At the signal she simply dropped like a stone. The air roared round her like the deepening blast of a furnace ; the friction of the wind was actually making her sides red hot when she slowed to a speed of ninety miles an hour.

She saw the lurking destroyer, she saw the whole starboard division of the British Fleet swoop down out of the north, and knew that not a ship would care to fire for fear of a resulting explosion which would wreck the Tower of London.

She saw the solitary horseman flashing the lantern signal again and again. She knew that she might be trapped to destruction, yet grudged the brakes which in the last two miles of air must be clapped on full to prevent her being dashed to pieces on Tower Hill. Down she fell like a meteor out of heaven, slowed, jarred her brake, jumped on the sharp recoil a hundred feet, then gently lowered her torpedo-shaped steel hull until with a feathery lightness she touched the pavement, and sent her drawbridge gangway clanging down.

Already the destroyer, alert for action, rose from behind the trees, flashed out her vivid searchlight upon the yacht, and in that glare confirmed her worst suspicions. His golden harness glowing, his black horse rearing and fighting the air, Brand lifted his arm as though to stay the destroyer's fire from blasting him.

Lancaster, obedient to the signal, spurred down the hill at full gallop. He reached the gangway, charged straight up the slope, and crouching down rode in through the open port.

Even before the master could follow, the destroyer lashed out with her machine guns.

For a moment the yacht was lost to sight in a cloud of fire and steel, but in the very midst of it, Lancaster ran down the slope of the gangway, wrenched Brand from under his dying horse, and dragged him back into shelter. As the yacht's gangway crashed home the destroyer passed overhead launching torpedoes.

The *Mary Rose* swung as she lifted, crashing right through the destroyer's fragile hull. The magazine exploded into the great hydrogen cylinder above; but Brand's yacht went on unscathed through a sphere of flame, on into space, with wreckage and mangled bodies streaming behind her.

XIV

THE STORY OF THE SHIPS

It is time now to tell the story of the ships, the genealogy of the *Mary Rose*, the secret of Brand's aerial wars, and how the great outlaw gained command of the air.

Down through the ages sweeps that Pageant of the Ships, with oar, sail, steam, electric, etheric power, cleaving the centuries since the world was young.

First come the oared Long Ships, the slave-manned galleys, the argosies of the Phoenicians, the Greeks, of Carthage, Rome, Byzantium, of Barbary, Norway, Venice, Genoa, Spain. They are human-wielded, sea-compelling engines.

Then come the Great Ships, the device of Henry VIII. They shattered the galleons of Spain, they wrecked the Dutch Republic, destroyed the Empire of France, gave Britain the command of the sea. They explored the planet, they created the greater commerce. They come under sail, they need no slave-engines, these white-winged servants of the winds, winged conquerors of all seas.

Then come the iron ships which laid the cables, peopled the lands, and narrowed down the world into a house for man; the steel ships, smoke-maned

conquerors of both wind and sea, not man-driven galleys, but steam-driven carriers, racing cities, and cruising fortresses.

They drove the white sails from the face of the sea, drove them to refuge in the skies. And so sweeps the majestic pageant of the ships into the golden age of seamanship. "There shall be no more sea," for man has taken wings to cleave the air. Poised on broad aeroplanes, alive with power flashed to them through space, the aerial battleships have claimed the very pathways of the eagles. Rolling down the cloud-seas come the snow-white, glittering giants of the electric age, England's dread Channel Fleet, surely the last supreme achievement of mankind.

And far aloft, attended by white cirrii, hangs one small star-like speck in the blue zenith, an unarmed private yacht offering to meet the entire navy of Britain and all the fleets of Europe in single combat.

There is a legend of John Brand I., that wandering on the moors by the Lands End, he came upon a dark and silent pool. Being in an idle mood he sat beside the bank throwing pebbles, and watched the little ripples spread away over still water. So the thought came to him of those small innumerable waves which constantly spread away from the earth's centre, the waves of gravitation.

Thinking profoundly he took a pebble in his hand. What mighty chord of the celestial music thrilled in that stone pulling it down to the earth? What was its chord of mass—how many millions of waves to the second? Perhaps a million vibrations.

Suppose then he made an engine which would sound that note exactly. The stone would fall off the planet, be whirled into space!

Could he build a ship to carry such an engine, strike the great chord, and hurl the vessel off among the stars? Could he arrest its flight, create the ship into a planet, free from the earth, and driven at his will within the limits of the atmosphere?

A pebble thrown into still waters, a thought thrown from Heaven into a clear mind, and ripples spreading down through history! We all know how Brand I. built the etheric ship, fighting his way through the long silent years of galling poverty and majestic thought. He was a lad when he threw the pebble, an old man when he set the engines in motion, sounded the chord of mass at last, lifted the ship from the earth—then failed to arrest its motion. In that strange sepulchre his body rests, wandering down the starways, lost in the depths of space, lighted by blazing suns, threading the constellations for ever and ever.

John Brand II., the builder of Lyonesse, was more daring than his father, and always more practical. His etheric ship, *Mars*, was brought under perfect control, and with Lock's propellor developed undreamed-of speed.

The *Mars* had a quality of attracting dust, drawing raindrops after her, and even small birds. Pebbles thrown from her port-holes would not fall, but followed in the wake as satellites. Her compass needle pointed fore and aft indifferent to the magnetism of the earth. About her hull strange wandering fires flickered and gleamed at night, and in the

cloud-fields as she passed above them, dull thunders muttered, with tremulous lightnings.

It was an attempt upon his life by anarchists which drove Mr. Brand II. to the idea of defence. Like the stone spreading ripples on still waters, his engines of the *Mars* could send out waves into the ether. He surrounded the ship with a small sphere of electric ripples, and high explosives are so sensitive to these vibrations that no shell or torpedo could enter this field of tension without being instantly disturbed. So the *Mars* was clothed with an electric armour, and the steel planet became invulnerable. And she could attack, projecting her electric waves ten miles through space to explode the cartridges carried by hostile troops, the ammunition of attacking field guns, the magazines of fortresses and ships.

John Brand II. sent out his fleet as he sent out his gold to serve mankind in the quiet channels of commerce. The engineers and captains of Lyonesse grew old in his service, and never knew the secret of the ships, their fearful powers as applied to war. John Brand III. reigned in his father's stead, and still the planets served as merchantmen, and the lightnings slept in their engines. No man had ever seen etheric power in action, no man, save Brand, could wield the destroying flame. And now the Channel Fleet had ordered him to surrender.

His planet of forged steel lay resting. Ice glistened on her flanks from frosty sprays of cirrii streaming past her. Beneath were the labouring battleships, the white seas of cloud, and the

newly risen sun blazed red in the east. Above her the stars in millions thronged the black deeps of Heaven.

A message flashed down to the flagship instruments. "Come up and fight me," said the *Mary Rose*.

The flagship answered angrily—"Come down!"

No man on an open deck could breathe the atmosphere up yonder where that steel fleck hung in the blue of Heaven, no aeroplanes could find supporting air, no gun could be discharged, no missile fired—and who could dare the awful cold of Space!

"I will come down," said the *Mary Rose*.

Like a meteor she fell until she touched the surf of the white cloud sea, and there lay gently rolling, half submerged, a spindle-shaped bolt of lustrous pearly grey, almost invisible. Every available weapon in the Fleet was trained upon her broadside. She sent another message by aerial telegraph to the flagship.

"I have led you out over the Channel so that no harm can be done by a rain of shells. To make myself a better target I shall come within point-blank range." The yacht took up a new position. "Fire!"

"I give you a minute to surrender," replied the flagship. "Is there any need for bloodshed? Yield, or I must sink you."

"Thanks. I am in perfect safety. Fire!"

A ten-inch projectile launched from the flagship exploded midway upon its course.

"Try a torpedo," said the yacht.

The weapon which would have destroyed a town

flew out from the flagship's bows, and was scarcely clear of the fleet before it was blown to pieces.

Then the whole fleet attacked, and for some minutes the yacht was lost to sight in the red hurricane of bursting shells. When the air cleared, the echoes still thundered among the clouds, and the yacht rolled violently on huge waves of air.

No fortress on earth could have outlived that close bombardment, yet she existed still, and ruthfully the Admiral sent word asking if there were any survivors.

"I am coming," said the yacht, "to take position alongside the flagship. I intend no hostile action, but if a single shot is fired, in self-defence I shall destroy the Fleet."

In bitter humiliation the Admiral waited, standing in the icy wind on the deck of his flagship. Never before had a British Fleet been captured, never one of our admirals humbled to the point of surrender, and death would have been easier to meet.

This steel thunderbolt could outstrip the swiftest cruisers then afloat, could ram the fragile aerial battleships, and was herself impregnable. The Fleet was at her mercy, and the navies of the world were obsolete.

She advanced quite slowly, swung on her own length, lay alongside of the *Devastation*, and flung her gangway on the quarter-deck.

Then came Brand's messenger, a prince of the blood royal, the Duke of Lancaster, clothed in the Queen's armour, bearing her Majesty's signet,

claiming no victory, enforcing no indignities, but with a salute to the white ensign, and a salute to the Admiral of the Fleet, paying the honours of war to a fallen power.

At the gangway Brand made the Admiral welcome.

* * * * *

A tremor went through the *Mary Rose* as on the Admiral's departure the starboard gangway clanged home against her side.

Brand entered the conning tower. "Stand by," he said. "Dead slow—five to starboard—ahead."

"All clear, sir," answered Captain Simpson, his hands on the levers.

"Steady! Rise."

The yacht rose gently, while the Channel Fleet fell away beneath her. Brand sat down in the chair beside the Captain, watching the indicator until the needle gauged thirty thousand feet.

"Way enough," he said. "Quarter speed ahead, west by north, half north."

"West by north, half north."

"Full speed ahead."

"Full speed it is." Captain Simpson leaned back with a sigh of relief, then glanced up sideways at the master's face.

"Light your pipe," said Brand.

"Thank you, sir—Great Death! you thrashed the Fleet!"

"I've done more," the master sighed. "I've broken a man's heart. Poor Rothschild!"

"Was that the Jew admiral?"

"A great gentleman," said Brand. "Are you sure, Simpson, that you can remember that formula for explosives?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell your ship's company that I don't ask them to face war risks on peace wages. The pay and pension rates are doubled from the first of this month." The captain started to his feet. "There, go away and take an hour's rest."

The captain grabbed Brand's shoulder from behind. "A warning, sir. The Dictator tried to bribe me, and he's bought nearly all your skippers. Don't let them know that new formula."

Brand turned round and shook hands with him.

"Get below," he said, "and, by the way, tell somebody to ask His Royal Highness to join me here."

The captain rolled away down the ladder. "Thrashed the Fleet," he muttered, "thrashed the whole Fleet! Great Death!"

Brand was alone now, and for some minutes paced restlessly the small domed room with its glass vault and walls. The sun was high in the black, star-strewn heavens, the cloud-sea vanished into the heat of the day. Beneath rolled the blue Channel, and on either side the land went up to meet an immense horizon. Broad on the port beam lay the coast of France, beyond on the port bow the wide Atlantic loomed. There on the starboard side was the English land from Beachy Head, faint glimmering in the east, even to the Start in far-off Devonshire. At his very feet lay the green Isle of Wight

masking a skein of intricate blue waters. There was Portsmouth, yonder Southampton, and northward Salisbury and Winchester, a score of cities, a thousand villages and farmsteads, where as the green melted away to blue, range beyond range of gently rolling downs, mist upon mist of exquisite rounded hills, up to the very stars of eternal night. And all the land must perish if he failed!

Someone was coming up the ladder, and presently Brand, turning away from the glass, encountered Lancaster.

The Prince saluted him, but Brand came forward, laying both hands upon his shoulders.

"My boy," he said, "where would you like to land?"

"Where you land, sir."

"I'd like to be sure of your safety, Lancaster, and I want to put you ashore."

"I'll see you damned first!"

Brand looked into his keen, fresh, comely face.

"You're most wonderfully like her," he said, absently; "and there's no bending her. I suppose you'll stay whether I like it or not. I've got to recapture Lyonesse."

"I want to see the game."

"Lancaster, you know my three big passenger boats?"

"*The Coronation, Grace à Dieu,* and *Gigantic?* Yes, of course. I came from New York in the *Gigantic* once—did it in sixteen hours. Why, there's room for this yacht in her after-cabin."

"The *Gigantic* was in dock when Lyonesse

was captured ; but Admiral Rothschild tells me that she is afloat since yesterday, guarding the town against me. She is in charge of a naval officer, with orders to ram at sight."

" But you thrashed the Imperial Navy ! "

" The *Gigantic* carries no explosives. So far as I see, I can't ram her, I can't blow her up, and she's so swift that I can't even run away. I've decided to set every man ashore who is not absolutely needed. Lancaster, you must go."

" Sir," answered Lancaster, hotly, " I'm here for the Queen, and I refuse to land."

" As you will."

A few minutes later the *Mary Rose* set all her idlers ashore in Devonshire. When she took flight again Brand and his captain returned to their seats in the conning-tower, and Lancaster stood behind them, with a life line to steady him during the coming fight. Together they watched the narrowing land beneath, as Cornwall tapered westward between the seas.

No clouds sailed in the clear sky to mask an attack.

" Wait for the night, sir," ventured Captain Simpson.

" Until the *Gigantic* is warned."

" You're right, sir. Could you move down with the sun behind you ? The yacht would be difficult to see."

" This cupola would shine against the sun. I wish we could make ourselves invisible."

" I think," he added, " the *Gigantic* will be lying with her head towards London, and if we keep

on this course her look-out can't fail to sight us. That would be awkward, so put her hard a-port, and set her course nor'-west."

The yacht swung rapidly and steadied.

"Nor'-west it is, sir."

"We'll come down from the north," said Brand; "we should sight her broadside at thirty or forty miles."

"Good," cried the captain, "she'll hardly see us at five miles."

Not a word more was spoken until the coast of Ireland loomed ahead.

"Hard a-starboard."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The yacht heeled over as she swung.

"South!"

The yacht came to an even keel, swung a point or two back, and steadied.

"South it is."

Far up against the sun a distant film of land blurred the horizon.

"Starboard a little; a little more; keep her at that."

Brand shipped a powerful telescope on slings and focussed the Lands End. There in a trembling mirage the granite city lay, the long glass roofs of her factories gleaming like silver scales.

"Half speed," he murmured; then, as the vessel steadied: "There's the *Gigantic*—broadside on—starboard a very little—too much—so. Keep her at that. She must be very low down—scarcely a mile above the roofs. She'll see us against the sky, so drop to ten thousand feet, Mr. Simpson."

The *Mary Rose* fell for a minute or so.

"Ten thousand, sir."

"Drop another mile—there—she's below the horizon now. Full speed ahead."

The sough of the dense air against the yacht's hull rose to a deafening roar. The heat in the cupola became intense, and had to be modified with a spray of liquid air. Brand returned to the telescope.

"There she is," he shouted. "I'll try to ram her propeller—watch my hand and steer as I beckon—she hasn't sighted us—couple on the auxiliary engines—all the speed you've got. Her hull makes such a blinding glare in the sun—I can scarcely see. Rise one hundred feet—ten more feet—stand by to ram—five down—she's moving! Starboard! Starboard! She's turning to ram—starboard more—more—more! Missed, by God!

Brand dashed across to the after windows. "Rise!" he yelled. "Rise, full speed—she's after us—she's charging! Back of all! Guns, Simpson! Guns! The lunatic has guns! Some Navy duffer has mounted heavy artillery. Back full speed, she's on us——"

Brand threw himself across the instrument table, set the formula for explosives, banged down the key, flashed out the electric waves for high explosives. Her red-hot bows cleaving the hurricane, the *Gigantic* came roaring down full on the broadside, flame streaming from her guns, shells bursting. Her ram was within a hundred yards, within fifty, the yacht, struck by the bow waves, fell reeling over on her beam ends, lost in a cloud of blazing scarlet

light, crushed down by enormous jagged wreckage of steel.

Then she righted, rolling violently, alone in heaven, while far down through space fell incandescent fragments of the lost *Gigantic*, destroyed by her own magazines.

XV

CAST OUT OF HEAVEN

LYONESSE had been in a state of trance, her factories silent, her house-fronts barricaded, her streets deserted, save for marching troops, and the grim shadows of patrolling warships.

Then at noon on the fourth day of the Terror, the white-hot wreck of the *Gigantic* whirled down upon the fields beyond Penzance; and Brand's orders flashed from the heavens commanding Lord Ulster's squadron to surrender, his troops to evacuate the city. The *Mary Rose* had defeated the Channel Fleet, had destroyed the *Gigantic*, was descending now in vengeance, while no man saw as yet that the little yacht ran blood upon her decks, and barely held the tenure of the air. The squadron fled in disorder, the regiments broke and scattered, the officials hid themselves, and the master came to his own. The *Mary Rose* piteously broken, her engines hardly alive, and half her crew slain or disabled, rolled slowly homeward, and fell at the doors of Brand's office, never to rise again. One may see the shattered hulk to-day resting with all her stains of blood and her wounds of battle in the splendid chamber of gold and marble which bears the legend of her victories.

Thousands of people gathered to welcome the master, but when he came down the gangway they forebore to cheer. He still wore the golden harness, but now it was stained and torn, his face was streaming with blood, his eyes were terrible. Simpson had a broken arm roughly bound, Lancaster an ugly wound across the shoulder. The master asked if there were any surgeons present, and two who came forward were sent on board the yacht. Then, through a lane of men standing uncovered in silence, Brand went on to the doors of his office, while Lancaster and Simpson returned to help with the wounded.

With the master's presence at once every nerve of the city thrilled to life, for as message after message went out to the chiefs of departments, electric yachts swarmed into the air, the streets were thronged, the tramcars started, and, Sunday as it was, banks, offices, and shops took down their shutters. The factories went to work with three eight-hour shifts at double wages, and never was there known such a fever of haste in the dockyards.

From St. Ives to Penzance earthworks were thrown up in defence, and all explosives were removed to mine the approaches of the city. Indeed, there was cause. The yards were a mass of ruins where no less than twenty etheric liners had been blown to pieces by the Government troops. Eighty-five ships of Brand's fleet were lying in various cities throughout the world, their crews in prison, and many of their engines disabled. There remained half a dozen old vessels worth patching up for service, and these rang night and day with preparation.

On the first day, late in the evening, the cargo ship *Lion* came in from Ballarat, and Captain Simpson took command of her in attendance upon the master. So came the evening of the 18th of June, 1980, the sixth day of the Terror.

In our National Portrait Gallery all the pictures have golden frames except one. Please come and see that painting framed in iron—"To the memory of Sarah Brand."

A woman, forty years of age, massively built, and of unusual stature, she stands in a deep shadow draped with heavy folds of violet cloth, her robe lashed at the breast with a chain of barbaric gold. She is crowned with an unruly mane of harsh red hair. Her eyes are pale blue, of startling brilliancy, her features of rugged, almost savage, strength. So was she in her life, and only her brother knew the deeds of mercy which she never avowed, the fierce love which found its expression in wrath, the burning passions only revealed in harshness, the mighty angel hid in the rough prison of her body.

She had built that granite cottage on the Tol Pedn cliffs, where the Atlantic storms thundered against her walls; and there she ruled with an iron discipline, keeping her chambers relentlessly bare and clean. There on the sixth night of the Terror she entertained her brother's guests at a dinner of Spartan severity, given in honour of Brand's new Government.

"Sir," she said to Lancaster, "you take the head of the table. You represent her Majesty to-night, so my Lord Bishop of London sits on your

right as Chancellor of the Empire, and his Grace of Clydesdale on your left as Foreign Minister."

So she placed the guests in order of their dignity. General Lord Fortescue, V.C., as Minister for War, the Earl of Rothschild as First Lord of the Admiralty, the Lords Commissioners for Canada, Australasia, Africa, the Secretaries for India and the Treasury, and the President of the Board of Trade.

"Jack O'Brien," she said to the last, "you and I will share the foot of the table."

Mr. O'Brien, President of the United Trades Unions, whose presence was resented by the rest, sat down at the humblest place in obvious triumph.

"But surely, Mistress Brand," he said, "where's the master?"

"My lords and gentlemen," said Sarah Brand, "my brother asks for no place at the table of the Imperial Council. He will wait upon you afterwards. Bishop, will you say grace?"

A murmur of astonishment went round the table, and the Ministers, doubtful until then, lest they be lifting a Dictator to the throne, saw clearly that the master did them honour. So was the absence of the host—late for dinner—construed not as an insult to his guests, but as the greatest compliment he could pay them.

The Ministers had been in council all day long, now they talked anything but politics, nor, after our Lady's health was drunk, would they consent to the absence of Mistress Brand.

"We have, indeed, no business left to discuss," said the Bishop, cheerfully. "Everything is settled."

"There's only one thing you've all forgotten,"

answered the hostess, smoothing her turbulent red hair, as she glanced from face to face. "You left out Ulster."

"My dear Miss Brand," said Clydesdale, "we've laid that ghost."

"He's not dead yet,"—the woman's eyes were kindling. "John never supposed he would dare to defy Lyonesse, or make himself Dictator, or depose the poor little Queen. You don't know what a man you're dealing with. Do you suppose he'll sit down meekly now?"

"Sure," cried O'Brien, "he could stuff all his meekness into one back tooth."

"You mark my words," said Mistress Sarah, gravely. "His Meekness has fangs in him yet, and if I know him, he will strike to-night."

"Not if I'm dentist," said Brand of Lyonesse. He stood in the curtained doorway deadly pale, and, by reason of throbbing, insistent wounds a bandage about his head. To-night in token of service he wore again the splendid golden harness of the Guard.

"I ask your forgiveness, gentlemen," he murmured.

"Give him some wine!" cried Fortescue, "he's fainting!"

"Wine," said the master, as reeling to the table he splashed champagne into a glass. "Yes, drink with me to our Lady Margaret, the Queen!"

He swallowed the draught of wine, and gaining strength stood presently erect.

"Yes!" He flung the glass shattering to the floor. "So ends Ulster to-morrow, and so perish all her enemies!"

He fell into a seat beside the table.

"I'm not very well," he explained; "my doctor's at his wits' end. Poor Boyes believes he can't keep me going another hour. Let me see,"—he was looking down at the table, his eyes half closed, trying to piece the words together—"I have a report to make; yes, it's about the ships.

"The *Lion* first, she's on guard. Two more are ready in the yards—old crocks, but they'll do to defend our base. I have good news. The—what's her name—I can't remember her name—brand-new ship of 25,700 tons under arrest at Glasgow, crew in gaol, ah, yes, the *Golden Hind*. It seems her people have broken out of gaol, captured the ship—left Glasgow heading south—coming to help. She hasn't reported to me yet—but she ought to have before now. That makes two ships to defend the base, with the *Lion* and the *Golden Hind* to fight. With these we can recapture ships enough to overthrow our Lady's enemies. Am I talking sense? I must be a little delirious. Here's a list of the ships to be recaptured. I forgot to bring the list."

He held his forehead now with both hands, and his eyes strayed until they fastened on Lancaster.

"How's your shoulder, lad? It hurts, eh? Will you be able to command the *Lion* to-morrow? And you, my dear Lord Rothschild? And you, Lord Fortescue? Will you command the ships? The captains I trusted have been betraying me, all except Ross of the *Golden Hind* and Simpson, commanding the *Lion*, but he's wounded.

"Thank God there'll be no more *Gigantic* to

fight. The glass of the cupola shattered about our heads, and the cold broke in, and the yacht was rolling over and over, eh, Lancaster? But to-morrow, the conquest of England!

"I know! I know!" The master spoke fretfully. "I'm hardly fit to serve her. My Lords," —he looked round hazily towards his sister—"my Lords, you must take command—you must save Margaret, my Queen. Tell her, my Lords, that the Chariot—the Chariot of the Sun—has—has fallen. Tell her I tried—tried——"

He rolled out of his chair insensible.

The men were crowding about him to advise, to ask for assistance, to help.

"Back! Back!" cried the woman. "He's mine! He's mine, I tell you!" Her hands wrenched at the gorget of his mailed tunic, she released the pressure on his throat, she bathed his head, all the time crying angrily at the men—"Get away—off with you, out of my house, get to your yachts, bring the list of the ships from his office. Bring the Imperial Fleet to guard him until he can fight. Stay, you! My Lord Lancaster, quick, cut away this chain-mail. Are they all gone?" Staggering to her feet, she called after Jack O'Brien. "Your yacht, sir, bring Dr. Boyes—965, George Street. You, Lord Clydesdale, telephone Boyes to be ready."

They laid the master on the bench in the window and when nothing more could be done, waited with what patience they might, Lancaster on his knees, fanning the still white face, Mistress Brand seated at the head of the table against a galaxy of electric lamps. Beyond the broad frame of the open window

glowed sea and sky in one great sphere of moonlight glory, and at times the perfume of seaweed came in on the salt cool air.

From time to time she plied the bandages about her brother's head with ice-cold water ; and always, clutched in the death-like rigour of Brand's left hand, the aerograph clicked message after message. Presently above the low murmur of the pulsing sea, the tireless instrument sounded insistent signals, so that the woman's quick brain began to take in the words flashed down by Captain Simpson from the *Lion*.

" Sorry to trouble you, sir. I'm getting anxious about the *Golden Hind*. She ought to be here ninety minutes ago. I asked the towns on her route, and she's not been seen either from Douglas, from Holyhead, or from Pembroke. Manchester reported a first-class etheric liner passing at 10 p.m. on the way to London. I asked the London office, and find she was lying directly over Whitehall at 11 o'clock, then headed for the west. I fear that Ulster's up to some new treachery. More news, sir—first-class etheric liner sighted from Salisbury heading for Lyonesse."

Wrenching the aerograph from her brother's hand, Mistress Sarah gave the signal " continue."

" Glad you read me, sir, my broken arm makes it hard to signal."

Mistress Sarah, little used to the instrument, spelled out an order slowly.

" Call up the *Golden Hind*."

There was a long pause before the aerograph stirred again.

"No reply, sir. Exeter reports the *Golden Hind*. She will be here in half an hour."

A servant announced Dr. Boyes.

"Doctor, come here,"—the woman spoke in low, even tones. "My brother is in danger—wake him for me."

The physician, a strong, swart man of fifty, without one word of answer, drew a chair to the master's side, and fell to instant study of the case.

Ten minutes passed while the sea crooned, beat upon slow beat of her everlasting music under the cliffs; and the clock against the wall throbbed out the seconds.

Lancaster answered the doctor's whispered questions, and the woman sat rigid by the table where glowing heaps of fruit, strewn lilies, and cut glass cast their reflections on black polished oak.

The ticking of the clock became so unbearable that at last Mistress Sarah, in feverish irritation, swept across the room, wrenched it down from the wall, and threw it out of the window. The thing fell and fell, but there was no answering from the sea, which still by beat and beat crooned the slow song of times past and present and to come, eternity unto eternity.

"Mistress Brand," said the doctor; "if this man sleeps he will live—if he wakes he dies."

"Would he wake if I moved him?"

"No—nothing would wake him short of an electric battery."

The aerograph began to speak again.

"What shall I do, sir?"

"Destroy the *Golden Hind*," clicked the slow signals.

"You must be ill, sir," flashed the swift reply. "Remember her power, her size, her speed. The *Lion* can neither fight nor run."

"Mr. Brand is unconscious. I am Miss Brand. Come down—rescue the master. He'll be captured—quick."

"Madam, it's too late. I should be caught aground. I must fight the *Golden Hind*. It will give you time to get the master away."

"How can you fight?"

"With the formula for explosives, and if she has none on board, I'll try the ram. Get the master away."

"Where are you?"

"Seven miles directly overhead. For Heaven's sake, be quick."

"He's right," said Mistress Sarah aloud. "Dr. Boyes, within ten minutes this house will be attacked and my brother captured unless I can get him away. There's only one place safe from treachery. Under this window the cliff falls straight to the sea, but fifty feet down there is a narrow ledge. From that ledge there are steps cut down to my brother's bathing place. He uses a knotted rope to reach the ledge. I'm going to lower him down."

"That I forbid," said Dr. Boyes. "It's almost certain death."

"To stay here is certain capture. He'd rather die."

Then looking up from his place by the master's head, "Our Lady is in love with him," said Lancaster. "He's got to be saved!"

"It's impossible."

"In the Queen's name," cried Lancaster, "I command!"

"Quick!" said Mistress Brand. "Run, lad, to the dressing-room—it's next to this; the coil of rope is in the window casing. There's no time to lose."

Once more the aerograph spoke. "My engineers have mutinied. If I'm rammed, your house is directly below — I can't move the ship — the engineers——"

Then silence.

"I've read the signals, madam," said Dr. Boyes. "I'll help."

Lancaster was at hand dragging the coil of rope, and Mistress Sarah seized the turk's head—a large knot finishing the end. Five feet from that she bent a half-hitch. "Dr. Boyes, lift him by the arms! There—" She passed the rope under her brother's back, slipped the turk's head through the ring of her knot, hauled taut, and had a sling under Brand's armpits ready. Breathing hard, she took up a coil of rope and passed it round the heavy iron guard-bar outside the window. She made the loose end of the rope well fast to the bar. "Lad," she said quickly to Lancaster, "lift his feet as I haul; lift him half out through the window."

Dr. Boyes laid on to the rope behind her, while Lancaster gently guided the master's body outwards until it swung clear, suspended by the armpits. Then

the rope was lowered away until the weight was taken by the rock ledge fifty feet below.

" Dr. Boyes," cried the woman, " leave the house at once—get to safety outside. His life depends on yours—you'll send down food, and you will rescue him. Lad—down the rope with you ! "

Dr. Boyes ran to get the servants out of the house.

" Lad, get down that rope."

" Madam, I help you first."

" My place is here—get down, and I'll lower some bedding. Get down, I say ! He may die before you can reach him."

Lancaster swung himself out against the moonlight and the sea, and once again the waves below beat in their slow monotony, the little waves of time, beating against the eternities from everlasting to everlasting.

The woman breathed a great sigh of content, reaching out her arms to grasp the bar, and swing out upon the rope. Even then a new star shone in the heavens, a growing glory lighting her red hair, her violet robes, and finding majesty in her hard face.

The earth was calling the *Lion*—rammed in mid-air—the wind raged against her flanks, she was red hot, she blazed white, and as a falling star, cast her fierce splendour over land and sea, attended by rushing hurricanes of wind, winged with the souls of dying men, and freighted with the bodies of the dead.

Then in a crash of thunder the light went out, and again the moon was shining on a silver sea, grey

cliffs, lonely, desolate and gaunt, crowned by a column of dust where a house had been.

And the little waves crept up one by one out of silence, to beat out their lives against the eternal walls.

XVI

THE QUEEN'S DAYS

THE 18th—19th—20th and 21st of June are known as the Queen's days, a time of quiet in the Palace, while Margaret was sheltered by the love of her servants from all the horrors of the blood-stained world. Outside the guarded walls reason had fled from the earth and our humane civilization seemed to be dying.

On the Wednesday we knew that Brand's council had assembled. On Thursday while we waited for news it rained, on Friday a merry breeze was laughing among the trees. On Saturday great clouds came sailing up from the west, and scattered their sparkling showers through the sunlight; but still we heard no tidings, saw no ships. On Sunday it rained again, and Margaret, with her knights and gentlemen, attended the service of the Eucharist. After luncheon Margaret left the Russian Prince as usual to his wine, and walked with her hounds beside the garden lake. Nobody knew what our Lady thought, nobody guessed how much our Lady hoped, but Sydney found her sitting in the rose arbour. At her feet the rippling lake pawed with tiny insistence on the pebbles, but the Queen was watching the clouds, a squadron of big white clouds which came from Avalon, from Lyonesse.

Trooper Browne, as usual, was with Sydney, but the recruit hung back a little so that my lord was alone when he bent on his knee before the Queen.

"What is it, Sydney?"

"We are sent, madam, to be in attendance on the Queen's Majesty."

"But I want to be alone."

Sydney looked up, and in his grave, grey eyes there was trouble.

"We all know," he said, "that our Lady wants to be alone."

"And yet you come?"

"I can't help it."

She saw the trouble deepen in his face. "God guard you, Sydney. What's the matter now?"

"Nothing serious, madam, but please sit quite still for a moment."

Even while he spoke a gunshot rang out close beside the Queen, a deep groan sounded from the bush behind her, and Trooper Browne rushed past with a smoking pistol.

"Let our Lady keep still," said Sydney, never moving; and presently Browne came back, with over elaborate calmness, to report.

"It's all right," he saluted; "only a duck."

"Ducks are out of season," remarked the Queen, gravely. "Trooper Browne, don't you know it's unlawful to poach ducks? This is not Canada."

"A wooden decoy duck," Browne explained, calmer than ever.

"Is it dead?"

"Quite dead, madam."

"Was it armed?"

"Yes—that is—no, madam."

"English?"

"Imported."

"Poor duck! I've heard the bushes rustling this last ten minutes. I even heard your wooden decoy duck breathe. Come, gentlemen, sit in the arbour with me, and look out for ducks."

They both protested.

"Nay, I command you, gentlemen." So they removed their helmets, and Browne, sheathing his pistol, sat down very gingerly all on edge, nursing his sword, red hot with embarrassment. Sydney crouched down on a stool at our Lady's feet.

"At ease, dear lads," said Margaret, pleading against their silence. "Only a minute ago you saved my life—now you must make glum faces. You're most depressing."

Still both men were silent.

"Come," urged the Queen. "We're two men and a maid under the roses, and it's your bounden duty to amuse the maid. Tell me the news. How is our guest, the Russian?"

Sydney turned away his face.

"Come," cried Margaret, insisting; "what does he see now—snakes?"

"They've grown, madam," Browne grinned. "He's having a fight with sea-serpents."

"I'd rather amuse the Queen," said my Lord. "My story is better than that."

"A story!" Now Margaret clapped her hands with a gay little laugh. "Once upon a time—go on, I like my fairies as naughty as can be, and mind, plenty of fairies."

"There's only one fairy left." Sydney looked away across the sunlit lake. "Romance is dead, and there's nothing to tell the fairy Queen but grim, sordid, horrible tragedy."

"He's awfully tired, madam," said Browne. "Why, we've had more fun these last three days than——"

"Let Browne begin." My Lord looked up with a smile. "I do believe he'll make it a fairy tale."

"Why, Trooper Browne!" our Lady laughed. "This after all your headlong adventures in Canada! Then London is not so tame and dull as you thought?"

"Dull! Mother will be standing on her head when she knows that I've made friends with the Marquess of Sydney, and actually spoken to the very Queen herself. Me!"

"You dear boy,"—Margaret unfastened her bracelet;—"when you see your mother, give her this with my love. There now, tell me the story."

Mr. Browne was a little hysterical, but presently, under threats from Sydney, began.

"I can't understand—do you know, madam, that there's another London underneath the ground, with thousands of miles of tunnels and passages, railroads and rivers—and—well, there is!

"Three nights ago, Sydney and I were off duty, and he was in my room telling me——"

"This man," my Lord interrupted sharply, "can smell things just like an animal, and as to his sight and hearing, they're very witchcraft."

"People here," said Browne, indignantly, "are blind, deaf, dumb, and their noses fit for nothing but catching a cold. Why, if Sydney turns round

a corner he's lost. Anyway, that night I heard something underground, crowbars, I thought—anyway, men at work. We knew there must be something wrong, so we armed ourselves and bolted down to the cellars. There's acres and acres of palace down underground, and what with the darkness, the hundreds of different sounds, and all the mixed smells——"

"What smells?"

"Why sawdust, madam, and wine casks and stores, machinery—all sorts of smells. I couldn't tell where to look. We were off near the south-west court, when all of a sudden I smelt sumach leaves rotting after a frost—Sydney made out it was drains, and that was no dream either when we got a little nearer. It came through a door, and behind we could hear men at work trying to keep quiet—shouting in whispers, and splashing as if they were all having a bath. When we broke through the door we found it opened into a ventilator shaft which goes up three hundred feet through the south-west tower. Close under us it opened down into a big tunnel half full of water, sort of railway tunnel it looked, but Sydney says it's a sewer."

"It's the Tyburn," my Lord explained.

A thousand years ago the Tyburn was a brook, and one can trace its valley still through Tyburnia—the Mayfair district, the dip in Piccadilly, and the hollows of Green Park and St. James's Park, to where it ran into the Thames at Westminster.

"The Tyburn," said my Lord, "has become a sewer, and it flows right under the Palace."

"A river under my Palace!"

"Yes, madam," said Browne, "we found it full of punts and little barges, with flaring torches to light them, and a score of sewer men working away like beavers."

"But what were they doing?"

"They were busy unloading the boxes, small chests, several tons, madam."

"Chests of what?"

"Dynamite, madam."

"Good gracious!"

"Please don't be frightened, there's nothing to fear," my Lord laughed easily. "I inspected the work, and the electrician showed me some really excellent casing and insulation. The foreman, a Mr. Briggs, had no doubt whatever that the effect would be most volcanic, and they all took quite a pride when I praised their efforts."

"To blow up the Palace!"

"Yes, Lord Ulster is ever thoughtful for our Lady's comfort. I proposed to send down refreshments."

"Refreshments," Browne chuckled. "He threatened to empty the Palace tanks and drown them."

"I'm sorry to say," continued my Lord, "that Trooper Browne was rude to Mr. Briggs. If his carbine had actually gone off—the dynamite you know—the situation needed delicate handling."

"They sneaked behind Sydney and made him prisoner!" cried Browne, indignantly.

"A guest," said my Lord, correcting him. "I had ventured to suggest that the explosives should be moved further down the tunnel and stacked

underneath the Departments of State in Whitehall, Ulster's seat of Government. They thought he might be annoyed, and Ulster, you see, provided food for their wives and families. They offered to take me to his Grace of Ulster."

"They lashed him down on the barge," said Trooper Browne.

"Yes," my Lord assented; "Browne jumped down into the barge on top of me, ran his sword through Mr. Briggs, settled with the electrician, and cut me loose. The rest of the men attacked us vigorously, but it was hardly fair play, as we could not provide them with swords. Several were hurt. After Browne's jump, I had little wind for talking, but in the end we resumed the conversation just where it left off."

"He'd talk a bird off a tree!" said Browne.

"Somehow," my dear Lord flushed, "I have a knack of making friends with the very roughest men, though I always fail with the smooth. This dear Browne, for instance, seems to get on with me. I told the sewer men that I had the honour to be Ulster's next-of-kin—that — that if — if the Lord Protector were to leave this world which he has so graced, certain estates would fall to me—which I could not accept. In fact, by a written deed I made them in some measure heirs of his Grace—and more suitable heirs than I for such a nobleman. I expressly by deed forbade them to assist at his death. If Whitehall is changed by earthquake, no man will fire the mine save my Lord Protector. He has laid mines, let him fire his mines with his own hand, and go to his God for judgment."

The Queen's hand stole out softly and rested upon my Lord's shoulder.

"And may I go on?" he asked.

"Surely."

"My friends of the sewers have been very good to me, and they had to save their families from hunger.

"They're a queer people, wearing great heavy boots up to their thighs, and rough suits of canvas. They lent us such clothes the night before last, and Browne and I went with them to see the mines of dynamite under Whitehall. In course of a long, rather unpleasant ramble we came directly underneath the Chancellery and got our friends to break a passage upward into the building. Last night—taking our swords as a precaution, we visited the Chancellor's room, and found there a gentleman engaged at the telegraph. We had to wait some time before this gentleman noticed our presence. When he was at leisure Browne offered him the use of a sword. I found him an accomplished swordsman."

"Who was this gentleman?" asked Margaret, and Lord Sydney rose upon his knees.

"Madam," he said, gravely, "I engaged my commanding officer."

"You fought the Duke of Gloucester!"

"I killed him."

Sydney drew his sword, and pointing the blade at his own breast presented the hilt to his sovereign.

"You have killed Rupert!" Margaret laid her hands upon the hilt. "Heaven be my witness that now, and afterwards, I am ready to share the blame,

and if there's punishment now or afterwards let it fall on me. What am I, Sydney, that I should have a friend like you, so loyal, so fearless, and so great? There, my dear friend, put away your sword. I knew that my cousin Gloucester was disloyal, and you have cleansed the dishonour of the Guard."

"I am forgiven?"

"So far as a very unhappy woman can forgive the dearest friend she has in the world." She thought for a moment, then, speaking eagerly, "What time did this happen?"

"At eight this morning, madam."

"Do you know that was the time of the early service?"

"I was thinking of that."

"Sydney, when I knelt before the Table, I saw you at my side!"

"To-day I have been at peace," said my Lord.

"I, too, Sydney. You have news for me. Why keep it back?"

"Madam, I have news. I want to turn my back —for once, upon my Lady. May I?"

He crouched at her feet again, looking away across the lake, the garden trees, and the white cloud flecks, even to where the sun was, westward.

"I must speak," he said in a low voice, "of Ulster, who is reputed to be my father. I don't think I have any bitter thoughts left, but I would not claim this man for my father. My mother was a gentlewoman, and is with the angels. That she was his wife so tarnishes her sacred memory that I would rather believe her mistaken in supposing the Duke of Ulster to be my father."

Margaret was stroking the man's bowed head. "Sydney," she whispered, "I loved her. And Trooper Browne is here."

"Browne is deaf," said my Lord.

"Browne is deaf," echoed the man who loved him.

"But Margaret hears," said our Lady; "and Margaret understands."

"In Ulster's office,"—my Lord looked down at the rippled lake—"I overheard an exchange of messages between his Royal Highness and the Lord Protector. Of all spies and eavesdroppers I seem the most fortunate."

"Oh, Sydney, you have news of Lyonesse?"

"Madam, for three days past, Ulster has been in possession of the city."

Our Lady uttered a low cry of fear.

"He captured one of the great etheric liners—the *Golden Hind*. Brand had but one ship, the *Lion*, on guard above his cottage at the time his Ministers assembled. The *Lion* was rammed by the *Golden Hind*, and fell right on the crown of the Tol Pedn cliffs, and the very rocks on which the cottage stood were thrown down the wall into the sea."

"I cannot bear it, Sydney! I cannot bear it!"

My Lord looked up, his eyes glittering with tears. "You are a woman, and women are braver than men. You are the Queen, and dying England dies with majesty. The lightnings of God shall find no cowardice, and at the Last Judgment England shall not flinch."

"I forgot myself," said Margaret very humbly. "Go on—I will be quiet."

"I must go on,"—my Lord wiped the sweat from his forehead. "When Brand recaptured Lyonesse last Sunday, Ulster's troops took refuge near Marazion, and there starved. On Friday morning, under orders from the *Golden Hind* they entered the city again, and for these two days they have murdered, plundered, and burned while they searched for Brand. Lyonesse is a ruin, but the master has not been found. It is known that he is alive, signals from his aerograph have been intercepted; but the search for his hiding-place has failed, and Ulster is coming back to-day."

The Queen was praying.

"In the great purposes of God he lives." My Lord lifted his eyes towards the declining sun. "There is hope, and I know that God will not let England go from serving Him. The fire of our national life dies down to ashes until the one spark left is hidden courage, ready to flame again when the time comes."

Browne turned his face away, for our Lady sobbed.

"Ulster is coming," said my Lord presently. "He has stolen the powers of Lyonesse, and for the time he is master—for the time."

Browne was peering at the western sky, shading his eyes with both hands.

"I see something," he muttered, "right under the sun, a bright speck, like a planet. Is that the *Golden Hind?*"

"Ulster is coming," my Lord shivered. "He will come here demanding audience." Then, looking up from where he crouched at her feet, "My Lady,"

he said in a very soft low voice, his lips tremulous, his eyes full of yearning love ; " perhaps this is the last favour I may ever ask—to see the Queen alone."

" Trooper Browne," said our Lady, huskily, " as I'm a woman I ought to be ready to receive the Duke when he comes. Please, will you go and gather some of the very dark roses that are nearly black—and bring them to me here."

" Margaret,"—my Lord's eyes watched his friend going away in search of dark roses. " I shall go with Ulster presently. For me this is the end."

" We shall not live, dear Sydney," answered the Queen. " We shall not have to bear the pain for ever, and Death is merciful."

" Then let the words come, Margaret, since nothing matters any more. Before I go out to meet this death, I love you. Oh, most royal woman that ever lived, I came to serve in the Palace knowing that because I dared to love the Queen, I must never know peace of mind again—except such peace—you say that I was with you this morning ? "

" At the Communion Table, yes."

" Was I beside you, Margaret ? "

" Yes."

" Did you see me lift my hands to take the Elements ? "

" They were covered with blood."

" At that moment I knelt by Gloucester, and my hands were wet with blood trying to tie an artery. I lifted my hands and you were beside me, Margaret ! Margaret, I have been at peace knowing well that to-day I must take my father's life."

"Oh, my dear brother! my brother Sydney! The only brother I have known."

Bending down she took his face within her hands and kissed him upon the forehead.

Then looking steadfastly into her eyes. "I see," he whispered, awestruck, "the Queen seated on the throne—the old throne in the Abbey, and Brand is standing on the steps of the throne. So be it." And laying his head upon her knees he cried, our Lady giving him ease with a touch of her fingers.

* * * * *

The Queen had granted audience to Ulster. In her face there was peace as of one dead, about her shoulders and in her hair she wore long, thorny, sprays of the dark roses whose petals were like a sacramental wine. She neither moved nor spoke, and silent on her right hand, and her left, stood the two Guardsmen, their hands resting on the hilts of their drawn swords in readiness.

The Dictator was greatly changed, grown very old, his flesh wasted, his eyes burning as though with fever. Behind him the sun was setting, the lake was red, and over his face the shadows of night were deepening.

"Princess Margaret," he said, laying bitter stress on the words of courtesy, "I have come to declare to the ex-Queen these written intentions of the Government." He presented a roll of parchment, which our Lady made no movement to accept. He laid the parchment at her feet. "Your Royal Highness is granted until sunrise," he announced, "to repudiate the treason of John Brand."

" Sydney," the Queen whispered, " speak to this man."

My Lord Sydney turned his eyes slowly to the Dictator. " George, Duke of Ulster," he said, very quietly, " Her Imperial Majesty commands your attendance at sunrise here. Meanwhile she is pleased to grant you my escort to the gates." Still with the drawn sword in his hand, my Lord saluted her Majesty, and backed from the presence. " Sir," he said to the Dictator, " we have her Majesty's permission to withdraw. Come." He led Ulster away, and as they passed out of sight among the trees, " Father," he said, " father !"

" What, you ? "

" There's no one in hearing, sir."

The Dictator turned upon his son. " What do you mean ? "

" All courtesy, sir."

" You abandon that woman's service ? "

" Otherwise, my dear father, you would have been shot in her very presence."

" You take service with me ? "

" His Grace of Ulster loses the old acumen. Was there ever a time, sir, when a son of our honourable house failed to go over to the winning side ? Come. I must get you out of this garden. Your life is not safe. And keep your eyes about you when we enter the Palace."

" Jim, are you playing fair with your father ? "

" Time will show that."

They gained the lower terrace, and Ulster, supporting himself upon the arm of his son, wondered why Sydney must turn to look back to

the lake, the rose garden, and the bower where Margaret sat.

"Good-bye," Sydney was muttering. "For ever and for ever, Margaret. Come, sir, come on," he laughed. "I've news for you." They entered the silent corridors of the Palace. "Queen Margaret has a keen scent for explosives, and all your thoughtful arrangements have been changed. From the Broad Sanctuary to Trafalgar Square your Departments of State are mined with high explosives. In your own office Gloucester's lying dead. There's conspiracy afield to take your life to-day, or Margaret would never have named to-morrow for surrender. Even with my help you may be dead by then. Hush! It's not safe to talk till we gain your ship."

They crossed the throne room, traversed the State apartments, and gained the head of the alabaster stairs.

"Guard, turn out!" cried my Lord, and the main guard paraded before they reached the porch.

"By her Majesty's command,"—Sydney saluted the officer of the day. "The main guard is desired to attend my Lord Duke to his ship. Pass, sir," he said to Ulster, "I attend you."

And as the main guard formed as an escort of State, Sydney hung back until Sergeant Dymoke passed him.

"Dymoke," he whispered, "fall out."

The Queen's Champion fell out of the ranks, and my lord held him within the shadow of the columns.

"Dymoke, old man,"—his voice was scarcely audible—"I'm going with Ulster in the *Golden Hind*, and I leave you a message for the Guard. I

know a little of these etheric ships. Long years ago Brand showed me the detail of their gear. When they rise they're free from the pull of the earth, and but for the brake would be whirled into outer space. One blow of my sword will shatter the brake past mending. I'm going for a long voyage, Dymoke."

"Sydney, we can't spare you! Oh, let me go myself, if it must be done."

"Am I not to guard my own honour?" My Lord dropped his sword on the wrist sling.

"I am the Queen's Champion."

"Live for her then," he said. He took off his helmet, and unfastened the Queen's favour, her glove, which was bound to the brow. "This to our Lady," he whispered. Then looking out to where the gigantic ship lay waiting him, and the Dictator impatiently cried for his son to come, "Tell her I go to plead for her and for England. Good-bye." My lord drew off his gauntlet, and, with his finger, touched his friend upon the forehead. "We shall not be long parted, you and I."

Then looking up to heaven, his face flushed by the dying sunlight, he set the glowing helmet on his head, took up his sword and passed slowly between the waiting ranks of the guard to where Lord Ulster received him upon the gangway. Even as the Dictator led him, he turned in the shadow of the port, and, lifting his sword hilt to his brow, gave the salute.

The gangway crashed home. Nine hundred feet in length, dwarfing the lofty Palace with her bulk, all gleaming steel aglow in the sunset light, the *Golden Hind* with one faint tremor spurned the

ground away. She rose from her couch upon the shattered trees, slow lifting, while the glass of all her ports, tier upon tier, glittered and flashed like rubies.

Dismissed from their ranks, the Guardsmen clustered about the columns of the porch, watched the great ship go up.

Then Dymoke spoke to the officer and the rest. "Lords and gentlemen of the Guard, I have a message to you which Sydney left me. The Dictator threatened our Lady's life, and goes to meet his death at the hands of his son. My friend was too knightly a man even to take her token on such a quest." He showed them our Lady's glove. "He dies for the Queen and for his honour."

The rising ship was already far aloft.

"He has destroyed the *Golden Hind!*"

The ship at terrific speed whirled upward into the heavens.

Then Dymoke, removing his helmet, spoke to the others for "our dear brother departed. He asks us to pray for him."

With bared heads they waited, these, my Lord's comrades, watching the ship, which like a blood-red star, glowed in the heights, and vanished even as the sparks fly upward.

May we all have strength at the last to serve as you served, to die as you died, Lord Sydney!

XVII

HER MAJESTY IN COUNCIL

THE sun was rising, the keen still air had a tang of smoke from one or two parishes sacked and burned over-night. Under the barricaded windows of St. Stephen's Palace a starving street arab was at work with a few grains of banana meal and a string noose, trying to snare a pigeon. A man watched him furtively from beside one of the buttresses of the Abbey. That man had been a barrister before the World-Storm, now he was a tramp, and his coat was buttoned up because his underclothes had been sold for a meal. All night he had been with a crowd in the Strand wrecking the hotels in search of food. A dog or two had been dragged out of the flames, and torn to pieces; but the barrister won not so much as a taste of the blood, because some stronger desperadoes charged in a body and carried the food away. Now the Savoy district was a smouldering furnace, and the barrister watched the street arab, intending robbery if the lad got meat.

Something caught his wandering attention; the body of a man, which lay at the base of the statue of Richard Cœur de Lion, out in the bare paved square. The barrister stole across from the Abbey,

but when he bent over the man, hoping for plunder, he found he had made a mistake. The supposed corpse proved to be alive, and remarked that he had nothing worth stealing.

The barrister shrank back, smiling vaguely. "Watching that boy in the hope of a pigeon, eh?"

"No," said the other; "it's better to rest and not use up one's tissue. That's economy."

The barrister sat down beside him, produced a pipe, and demanded tobacco.

The other shook his head, but the lawyer thought that a little friendly conversation might win him a fill for his pipe. So he looked at the starving wretch beside him.

"Oxford?" he ventured.

"Yes, Brasenose. Are you a college man, too?"

"Dublin," said the barrister. "I was a novelist."

"I was a curate; I used to preach about the Day of Judgment—but d'you know, it's quite different. The canonists never suggested that it would last so long, but it's extremely interesting, and I'm planning a work on contemporary Eschatology."

"Judgment be blowed," the barrister snorted, "it's the usual cause and effect, machinery broken down—passengers hungry. I'm beastly pinched."

"Are you really?" The curate still had a trace of his pulpit manner. "Now that is most curious. My hunger has gone away quite, but if my mind seems to wander pray correct me. Am I talking nonsense now?"

"No; what was your last meal?"

"A portion of rat," said the parson, smiling at the pleasant suggestion of memory. "But my landlady has taken to improper courses, led away, poor thing, by her daughter. She has joined one of the cannibal clubs. I felt that she was becoming untrustworthy, and withdrew to the streets."

The barrister laughed wearily. "My wife and children—" he said; "I shot them last night—well—who cares?"

"How shocking," said the curate. "Hope," he continued, "is dead, and our prayers break upon the brazen echoing heavens. Who would have supposed that the world would die so hard?"

"Don't preach," said the barrister, "it makes me sick."

The curate looked up with a vacant stare at the towering heights of the Abbey. From far away came the rumble of the organ, for this was the time for the early Celebration. By the calendar it was Monday, the Twelfth Day of the Terror.

"I think I could have hoped," the parson wiped a tear away with his torn sleeve, "only there's always such a crowd at the Government food shops. The men trample the women and children to death, and that takes away one's appetite."

"Yes, we're savages now," said the barrister, "we've shed our infernal skin of gentility."

He looked away towards the street arab. The lad was rejoicing on the verge of success, but rejoiced too early, for the pigeon flew clear of the snare. Then the lad cursed.

"I watched all night," said the curate, "by the Palace. Our poor little Queen works hard."

The other was cynical. "Does she?"

"D'you know," said the other, "that Ulster is dead?"

"No such luck."

"But it's true. A woman stabbed him. Really."

"How do you know?"

"I crept into the porch, and there were two gentlemen of the Bodyguard, talking. They turned me away into the rain. D'you know there was something going on. All night I saw ships and private yachts, hundreds of them, reporting at the Palace towers. The air was black with them coming and going."

"It may be," muttered the lawyer. "Ulster dead!"

"Once," the curate went on bubbling with news, "a Guardsman rode out with his servant, and the orderly stopped behind to tighten a girth. I helped him. D'you know I smelt bread and real cold beef in his wallet. He told me that the trades unions have proclaimed a Republic—yes, at Manchester. Then I asked him for some of the meat, and he was so rude."

"The Republic proclaimed already? Then Ulster must be dead. My friend, do you realize what this means? The Republic? It means that the Territorials have revolted, five hundred thousand men in arms against the Government."

"We have the Fleet." The curate lifted his head and answered proudly.

"The Fleet, Mr. Parson? And when the Republicans seize the power station, when they cut off

the whole supply of electric force—what becomes of your Fleet? Answer me that!"

"Oh, but my dear man, really, don't y'know, we have Malta, Gibraltar, and the Newfoundland station. They can all flash electric power to our ships."

"If they had warning, yes; but all the telegraphs are cut. I tell you the power stations will be captured this very day, and nothing can save the Fleet. I wonder—when the London guardships founder, why, we may get some food from the wrecks! Yes, food! And the London Unionists, too—they'll be revolting to-day—they'll attack the departments of State. Parson, I know a house not far from here, with five barrels of flour. There'll be no police to-day—come on, let's rob that house!"

"Rob a house?" said the curate, wistfully. "Oh, but I'm in Holy Orders, don't y'know." Then rolling over exhausted, "My dear friend," he whispered, "couldn't you bring me just a little flour?"

"I might," the barrister sneered, "and I might not. All right, go off to sleep, don't mind me." He looked round. "Hello, the boy's got that pigeon!" The barrister scrambled to his feet. "The little brute!"

He looked at the curate, who seemed to be asleep, then at the street arab who was sucking the pigeon's blood. He felt the parson's clothes for tobacco, but his eyes were on the lad who had captured food.

Staggering with weakness he went for the street arab, drawing a knife from his pocket. The lad crouched unheeding, tearing the bird apart. The

barrister, staring dreadfully about him, stole upon the lad, his knife ready, his lips twitching, his teeth set. Then a rifle shot rang out from one of the barricaded windows of St. Stephen's Palace, the barrister leaped into the air, and fell doubled up upon the pavement, his limbs relaxed, his mouth wide open, One of his legs gave a last twitch and he lay quite still. The street arab had run away.

Then from a distance came the steady tramp of marching men, and the curate seemed to wake at the sound from a spell of sleep. He rose upon his hands and knees, he tried to stand up, but he had not the strength. He looked at the Palace, and just opposite to him was a door which led into the purlieus of the House of Lords. He crawled across the pavement, lifted himself wearily up the low steps, and banged with a stone against the door.

Nearer and nearer came the tramp of men.

"Help!" screamed the curate. "The Republicans! Save me! Save me!"

* * * * *

In the Council Chamber at the Queen's Palace, my Lord Protector's Ministers were assembled. The Duke of Ulster had warned them, the Princess Margaret summoned them. Our Lady was to render her submission, to repudiate the treason of John Brand.

Then upon a flourish of trumpets, entered, not his Grace of Ulster, but her Imperial Majesty attended by a hundred gentlemen-at-arms.

Amid the consternation of Ulster's Ministers it was the First Lord of the Admiralty who dared to

come forward barring our Lady's passage to the throne.

Waving his hands towards the foot of the table, "Madam," he cried, "the place for the Princess Margaret is here."

For a moment the Queen fell back, surprised at old Lord Mendip's audacity, then her eyes glittered ominously as she turned to the adjutant of the Guard.

"Tell this gentleman," she said, "to stand aside."

So she swept on to the throne, and there turning, faced her enemies. Our Lady was in mourning, robed in a cloud of dusky violet silk, some folds of it veiling her head and making the sad face white in livid contrast. Verily she was Queen, if only by right of sorrow, by majesty of pain, and by dominion of men's love and worship.

"My lords," she said, nervously, "and gentlemen," this with a gracious bow, and a smile of welcome. "I am shy at having to meet you here again—forgive that to a woman—here, where you honoured me with—with your homage. Do you remember, it was in this very room, and the gray light stole in through the frost on those windows. How bitterly cold it was, and I had just come from where my dear father lay in death. Don't you remember? You, my Lord Mendip, cried 'Long live Queen Margaret!' You, Mr. Jesmond, told me how I must wear the terrible white crown, sit on the stone of Destiny—and I cried. You, Sir Roderic Scott, were first to kiss my hand—this hand which has gone cold at the very thought of it. And afterwards, in the Abbey, before the altar, you swore to

serve me—all of you. How have you kept that oath ? "

The Ministers were standing in groups about the table, whispering one to another behind their hands. Lord Roderic Scott was inquiring of the impassive Guards as to his Grace of Ulster, when once again the Queen began to speak.

" You have come," this very gently, " to receive —what are the words ? Yes, my repudiation of the treason of Mr. Brand. There are some other things mentioned, I think. Will you not sit down ? "

Reluctantly, one by one, the Ministers took their seats in order of precedence.

" Thank you," said Margaret, " it is right that you should sit, and that I stand until I have dealt with this matter of treason. I am to repudiate treason. Oh, my lords and gentlemen of the Imperial Council, do you forget that by the Coronation oaths I must do more than repudiate every treason ? I am bound to punish treason, to punish treason with death. And I am resolved this day, either to punish all treason in my realm, or die in the attempt—yes, die ! I know the cost. I have been honoured with the service of many loyal men, and I have not failed any of them in love or gratitude. I have only found one strong friend in the whole world, and he is John Brand. I have not failed him in love or in gratitude. He has dared to be true, dared to be loyal, dared to be my friend—and he has paid the price. He was the richest man in the world—who is so poor now ? He was the most powerful subject that ever a sovereign had—who is so fallen ? He was desperately wounded fighting for me, he is a hunted

outcast for my sake, and he is ready at any time to die for me.

"The man who is guilty of treason must die, or I refuse to live.

"You are wondering if I speak as the Princess Margaret, or as Queen and Empress? Well, for the present I am content to be one concerned for your honour, for your dignity. I have a letter here—see, this letter—bearing all your signatures. You wrote to me, twelve days ago—saying that a Bill was passed by Parliament deposing Margaret, appointing a Lord Protector, and tearing up the British Constitution. It took hundreds of years to create that Constitution, and it was destroyed in a few minutes. Without consulting the people, or their sovereign, the Parliament under your guidance did this thing, then blind with panic, wriggled away into dissolution, leaving its precious Bill to be dishonoured by all honest men. My lords and gentlemen, how about your oath?"

The Ministers were ill at ease, some passing furtive notes one to another, the rest consulting in whispers.

"You had the Lord Protector of your choice," said Margaret, bitterly. "He once betrayed the Indian Empire for a bribe, and laid the blame upon an innocent man—who died for it. Lately he divulged the Formula of the Fleets, gave shameful concessions to his Russian master, and would sell his Queen, even to such a buyer as Prince Alexander. Nay, silence! I command your silence, gentlemen, while I speak. Proof piled on proof in Ulster's own handwriting, condemns this felon. You are

waiting for him now to sit in judgment on me. So you keep your oath!

"You swore to be faithful to Ulster? Why, half of you wrote privately to me betraying him! And others of you in privy conspiracy, offered the kingdom to my cousin Rupert—such is your honour! And having betrayed me, and betrayed Ulster, and betrayed Prince Rupert, you came back here to humble me, to punish me, to receive my abject submission, to demand my repudiation of John Brand! What a court of honour! Do you know where Rupert is—the Duke of Gloucester?"

Our Lady was breathing deep, but not another sound broke the silence until she spoke again.

"He is in Ulster's office, gentlemen. Your letters to him are lying upon his breast, and lest any of them be blown away by the wind, they are pinned down with a sword. My cypher is inscribed upon that blade. I am favoured, my lords and gentlemen, that you are polite enough to hear me now without whisperings or scribbling of notes, while you await the Lord Protector's coming. Are you wondering where next my sword will fall? Is Ulster late?"

Her Majesty ordered the barring of the doors. "Where is your leader?" she asked. "Are you deserted by the chief of your rebellion? Let the Guard salute!"

The gentlemen of the Bodyguard presented arms, and Margaret took the throne.

"Stand!" she commanded, and in amazement the Ministers obeyed. "I have to speak to you concerning the action of my dear friend now at

rest, Trooper of the Bodyguard, James, Marquess of Sydney.

"By the hand of his own son, I have taken the Duke of Ulster's life for capital felony. Your Lord Protector is dead, and I am Queen."

The Guard ordered and grounded arms with a crash.

"Come, gentlemen," said Margaret, "I have made an end to your delirium of treason. You were once my people's chosen servants—who else shall I trust if I may not believe in you? I recall you to your oaths, your patriotism, your honour, your manhood. I ask you again to be my Ministers, to accept my love and confidence. One of you I except." And Margaret's eyes fell on Lord Roderic Scott. "Oh, be kind to me, gentlemen," her voice broke with a great sob. "I'd rather be a servant and scrub floors, yet I am Queen—you laid that burden on me, and I must reign until it pleases Heaven to let me die. But must I go on fighting all alone? Is there no one left who cares for England's honour?"

For a moment there was silence, then the First Lord, the aged Earl of Mendip, rose to answer.

"Dear madam, dear sovereign, please let me speak for my poor colleagues here, and comrades in wrong-doing. I am too old to blush—my blood is all needed at the heart which still beats only for the service of the Empire—but I'm sure I never dreamed I was such a villain. Your Majesty has youthful blood, and dauntless courage, but pardon me, not quite omniscient wisdom. Some vestiges

of right remain to us, some quivering nerves of honour, even some shreds of manhood.

"In the evening of our lives we have had the grace to worship the Evening Star, we called her Margaret. The sun of our Finance was Mr. Brand. It is no censure if I say that the sun was sometimes rather hot for us. In a state of ecstasy, perhaps, he fell from the heavens, came too near, and burned us. Were we a little restive at being burned? Was it unnatural that, in the agony of a world destroyed, we forgot our worship of the Evening Star?

"Well, well, I shall pursue the metaphor no further. Mr. Brand has gone with Ulster, and the unfortunate Prince Rupert, to face a greater tribunal than ours."

"He is not dead!" cried Margaret.

"Stripped of his power, wounded, a fugitive——"

"The man who saved the honour of the Empire."

"The man who wrecked the world!"

"Gentlemen!" our Lady's white face was set in stern defiance. "As he was loyal to me, so am I Brand's loyal friend. I have sent the royal yacht to succour him, and he will come back with his ships to meet my enemies."

Lord Mendip bowed. "We are ready," he said, "to serve your Majesty, but——" a rifle shot rang out beyond the palace walls, then another and another.

"But what?" asked Margaret, scornfully.

"Madam, this Brand is an attainted traitor."

"Attainted by whom, pray?"

Again there were rifle shots in the distance, a dropping fire.

"Attainted, madam, by the Commonwealth."

"Am I not sovereign?"

"Madam, I spoke with unbecoming fervour of the gentleman who—his party, madam, the Labour Party——"

"His party? Listen, my lord, to that firing! Is this a time for parties? Lord Mendip, in the peril of the State there is but one party—mine! You serve me as Brand serves me, or you are rebels."

Sir Myles Strangford, Secretary for War, rose to give answer.

"Your Majesty," cried the War Secretary, "we are loyal. We will take the oath and serve!"

"Sir!" our Lady flushed with rage. "Do I hear you speak of oaths?"

For a moment her voice was drowned in a roar of musketry. "My patience is at an end. Rupert is dead, Ulster is dead; shall I spare you? I let you live while you are loyal to me, and at the slightest sign of treason I shall kill. As you tore up the Constitution, so I reign—I reign in the way of my fathers—so long as there is danger, absolute Monarch. Gentlemen of the Guard, you may withdraw—we need no protection while our Council sits!"

She rose from her throne, she turned her back upon the Council, and so stood waiting until she should be alone with her sullen, mutinous, vengeful officers. They saw that she looked out through the bayed windows; not the tears which blinded her or the forlorn gesture of her prayer for help.

The gentlemen-at-arms had swung to half sections and marched out from the chamber before our Lady moved. These windows, from a high salient of the Palace, commanded Whitehall. Half veiled in mist, the departmental buildings flashed with a thousand tiny points of fire, the rifle flame, the blaze from heavy artillery, then the glare of exploding shells. For now the crackling of musketry was drowned by spitting, shrieking machine guns, and the great roar of battle.

Sir Myles Strangford came and stood beside our Lady's throne as though on guard. A shell screamed close above the roof, a stray bullet crashed through the window and almost grazing Margaret's hair, lodged in the wall behind.

"Sir Myles," said our Lady, turning to the Secretary for War, "can the Departments hold out?"

"Your Majesty, for Heaven's sake, take shelter."

"Are the Departments safe?" she insisted, smiling.

"I had eight hours' warning, madam. The buildings can hold out until Lord Mendip's patrol ships come to the rescue."

"I have called them, madam," old Mendip touched his aerograph. "The Departments will be relieved in an hour."

"These Republicans, Sir Myles—are there many of them?"

"Twenty-eight thousand," answered the Secretary for War. "They're bringing up their batteries, and certainly, madam, we depend on the ships."

The firing slackened now, and Margaret, returning

to her seat, questioned Lord Mendip as to affairs in the Midlands. It was true, he admitted, that the Republicans had attacked the power station, and, in the event of its capture, nothing could save the Fleet. But the position was an impregnable fortress, the Channel Squadron had been ordered north, and, indeed, there was nothing to fear.

"Nothing to fear," our Lady muttered to herself. "Nothing to fear. Then, my lord, are these Republicans mad? The Departments impregnable, the power station impregnable, the ships expected; on these conditions the Republicans would never dare to attack. They would not dare to attack unless they knew the Fleet could be destroyed. They expect to capture the power station; they're sure of it—they stake their lives on that. Are you sure, Lord Mendip, of this power station?"

"There's no stronger fortress in Europe."

"My lord, is any fortress proof against treachery? These rebels have staked their lives that the place will be betrayed to them. Call up the officer commanding."

The old lord, with tremulous fingers, signalled by aerograph, but there was no answer. Again and again he called, but there was no answer.

"Madam," he said, "I fear——"

The aerograph began to be disturbed; a rush of signals hummed from its armature.

"Position mined—rebels in possession. Ground the Fleet! — Ground the Fleet! — Ground the Fleet!"

"Oh, quick!" cried Margaret, in agony. "Order the ships to ground!"

The First Lord, poor Mendip, had fallen back in his chair, his white face convulsed, his fingers twitching and pulling in frenzy at the key of his instrument. Our Lady rushed to his side, seized the aerograph from him, begged him to dictate the orders to the ships. And all the while, the old man striving for utterance, the rest of the Ministers frantic to hear him speak, the gun-fire quickened in the distance, and some one was thundering for admittance outside the door of the room.

" He's dying ! " Margaret's voice broke to a wail of misery. " Oh, who knows the cypher of the Fleet ? We'll be too late—too late ! "

The door burst open, an officer of the Bodyguard broke headlong into the room.

" Madam," he yelled, " the ships—the destroyers of the patrol are foundering ! "

Lord Mendip's head had fallen back, his fingers were tearing at his breast, his eyes were glazing. Then his arms fell limp, and the change passed over his face, and the jaw dropped.

Our Lady bent and kissed the still dead face, then reaching out her hand beckoned the living.

" Kneel, gentlemen," she said in a low, awed voice. " Pray for the passing Fleet, for ninety thousand men called by their God."

So they all knelt, our Lady, the adjutant of the Guard, the Ministers of State, while outside, the crash of musketry, the roar of guns thundered the requiem of the English Fleet. Presently the body of the old lord slipped down and fell before Margaret's knees. Shrinking away, she went back to her place upon the throne.

Some of the Ministers were moving to take away the body, but our Lady checked them.

"No," she said, "do not take it away, but lay it there before us upon the table."

They laid the frail body upon the table, paying some reverent offices, closing the eyelids, folding the hands. Shrinking from that presence, dreading, fearing it, our Lady lifted her reluctant eyes.

"We need this reminder," she said faintly, "that we are all being judged."

Then that swaggering, gallant, old Lord Roderic Scott rose, bowing to her Majesty and to the dead.

"Madam," he said, "the Fleet is gone, the Departments may last an hour, and then the Republicans will turn their guns upon this building. If your Majesty is determined to wait, I trust we shall all have the decency to die like gentlemen. But I beg your Majesty to accept the use of my private yacht, and return to Windsor until we can raise an army."

"My dear Lord Roderic," our Lady smiled. "What armies would care to fight for a runaway Government? I think I have a better plan than that. Sir Myles, I see you have troops here guarding the Palace."

"Three thousand, madam, and a battery."

"You have not enough men to save both the Departments and the Palace?"

"Not nearly enough."

"But if we had all the troops here, we might save the Palace?"

"A desperate venture, madam."

"So in any case the Departments must be lost?"

"Better, madam, to give up the Palace itself, than to surrender the very seat of Government."

"The Palace," cried Sir Roderic, "is no safe place for your Majesty."

"I beg you, madam," urged Jesmond, "to retire."

"Why so nervous, gentlemen?" asked Margaret, bitterly. "I see anxiety in all your faces—so loyal, so moved for my safety. Is it because you mined my Palace with a hundred and fifty tons of dynamite? How thoughtful of you! How considerate! You supplied me with explosives enough to mine all your Departments of State; for two days, gentlemen, I have been considering your case. There, over by the wall, on that little table, stands an electric key—one touch on that key at any moment these two days past would have released you all from these dull cares of State. One of you—a gentleman seated at this table—is the very leader of these Republicans. His aerograph lies upon the table before him, and he appears anxious to warn his friends by signalling." Her Majesty's piercing stare was fastened upon none other than Lord Roderic Scott. "Lord Roderic, you will lower your hand, both hands, down against your sides. Mr. Jesmond, you will take away his aerograph. If he lifts his hands he dies. Sir Myles Strangford, you will signal the officer commanding at Whitehall to withdraw and fall back upon the Palace, and you will order the troops here on guard to cover the retreat."

* * * * *

Whitehall, a congeries of palaces, a city in itself of unusual grandeur, had never seemed so vast as when it loomed through the cloud of battle. Pale wreaths of smoke girded the walls, columns of dust went up from bursting shells, and little, innumerable spurts of fire lightened the windows, outlined the terraced roofs. A column of red flame waved high above the Admiralty, and, shattered by artillery from beyond the river, the Palace of St. Stephen's crashed down in acres of ruin. One by one the palaces were taken, barrier after barrier was broken through as the brigades of starving Republicans, mad with bloodshed, swept back the Imperial troops.

And all through the rooms and corridors, thousands of people went about their business, in the strange English way; the clerks who still worked at their desks or helped to bury the archives and treasures of their departments; the nurses, the surgeons, the chaplains who helped the wounded, gave comfort to the dying, closed the eyelids of the dead; the soldiers who fell back from the windows to fight the advancing flames.

It was long past noon when the Queen's orders came—the signal to retire upon her Palace.

Building after building was left to the next triumphant rush of the enemy, until the Imperial forces were jammed together at the Foreign Office, guarding the non-combatants, and, under cover of troops from the Palace, began the final movement of retreat. It was but half a mile to the Palace gates along Death's Avenue.

Up against the windows of the Council Chamber, nearer and nearer lashed the hurricane of sound—

the yells of dying men, the rattle of musketry, scream of machine guns, roar of artillery, crash of falling walls, and, beyond all, the deep dull roar of the conflagration.

Within the Council Chamber the great lords of the administration sat still at their table. Before them all lay the body of the old Lord Mendip, the green cloth of the table casting a dreadful glow upon his face. By the left hand there was placed an electric key with covered wires trailing to the floor, and opposite to that two Ministers sat guarding Sir Roderic Scott, a prisoner. Bolt upright in the chair of state, our Lady never moved save once, when she covered her face with one fold of silken gauze from the hood of her violet robe.

Sir Myles Strangford at the windows reported from time to time how the battle went.

"Shot down like dogs," he cried. "Nurses, civilians, clergy, and broken troops, officers beating the poor fellows with their swords—and the retreat—by George they're falling by hundreds. The whole avenue jammed." For a moment his voice was drowned by the uproar.

"The rear guard's clear of the Department!"

Her Majesty leaned forward. "Lord Roderic Scott," she cried, "reach forward your right hand and touch that key! Mr. Jesmond, take the knife and drive it into that man's flesh until he obeys me. Now, Roderic Scott, reach out your right hand, and lay it on the key! and may God have mercy on your soul!"

* * * * *

And the river rushed in upon the site of Whitehall.

XVIII

THE QUEEN'S MADNESS

THIS poor history book! It set out to chronicle the affairs of all mankind, and has only room for one woman.

So a boy goes forth into the world strong, careless, jubilant, thinking the Earth, the lights of Heaven, the dark of Space, all made on purpose to be a playground for him. But an old man looks back with his wan smile of memory, and sees that the sun, moon, and stars made but an aureole for one mighty love.

Let the old man maunder a little at the heads of the chapters—you may be an old fool, too, before you have turned the last sad page in the dear Book of Life.

Except for some who foully revile Brand, the learned historians lay all the blame on Margaret.

Learning has chilled the blood in their sluggish veins, conceit of their knowledge given them scaly hides, and their blind logic made them sinuous, these bookworms, who with exuding venom have fastened their poisonous teeth on Margaret's fame. She sheltered Brand, staked crown, reputation, life upon the hazard of her faith in him. She had Prince

Rupert slain, the Dictator slain, and the metropolitan chiefs of the Republic slain. The seat of treasonous revolt against her she cleansed with the waters of the Thames. Aye, and more, she reigned as no sovereign in modern times had ever dared to reign. We were lost in the night of despair, we fought in the maelstrom of Death, but the memory of that time is the memory of one white spirit, pure and strong, whom no waves of misfortune could overwhelm, or mist of anguish hide. We were men-at-arms who worshipped Margaret then, and those that are left of us are old fools now, fearful lest any venom so much as touch her robe.

In these days there were two or three attempts made by insane persons upon her Majesty's life. At the petition then of the whole corps of the Body-guard she appointed orderlies for close attendance upon her person, choosing the two nearest friends of my Lord Sydney, Sergeant Dymoke to be on duty in the day time, Trooper Browne at night. Her Majesty was pleased also to confer upon Trooper Browne the honour of Knighthood in the order of St. Michael and St. George.

It was after midnight—how we missed the bells of fallen Westminster—and Trooper Sir Patrick Browne, faint with excess of pride, stood in a vain pose by the door of the private rooms. He was startled out of all his dignity when, the door opening, he found himself of a sudden face to face with her Majesty.

"Hush!" our Lady pressed a finger of warning to her lips. "There," she cautiously shut the door. "I'm afraid of waking Miss Temple. Follow softly."

So gathering her white cloak, she sped like a ghost, he following, to the south-west tower. Not stairs but inclined planes circled upwards, an easy hill, to where a flight of steps gave on the roof, and one looked out over London.

This night began the great gale, and already, far down beneath, the trees were lashing and swaying. Low above trailed the flame-lighted clouds, the wind was roaring round the tower walls, and red embers flashed past in the smoke. The gale swept by in gusts, fiery hot, then of a sudden, icy cold, then slanting hot again. Right up against the wind, Belgravia was in flames, and down to leeward, the whole district of the Strand glowed like a furnace. Spiral columns of flame went reeling eastwards, then lifting clear from their base, rolled up and burst. And over all the roar of wind and fire one heard the screaming machine guns crushing out the Republican revolt.

"Madam," cried the trooper, "come away, this is too horrible for any woman."

"For any woman? Sir Patrick, are there not thousands of women yonder?" Our Lady turned, the flame-light on her face. "Do you think I care? Do you think I suffer? Dear lad," she turned away again with a wan little laugh, "I don't care now, I'm an old, old woman—past caring any more. Let me rest here."

The trooper laid his cloak in a sheltered place, and there for a long time she sat, crouched down, all shrunk into the corner, staring at the flames.

Was this the Margaret who seven weeks ago held court of Love in her gardens, Queen of the May,

loading grave officers of the Palace with wreaths and garlands, then with the mischievous gravity of a fairy, tootling a jig on the pan pipes while the Lord Great Chamberlain danced !

Margaret crouched down in a corner, haggard with sleepless misery, staring with great wild eyes on the burning of London !

The sentries were calling from salient to salient, bastion to bastion.

" Number one, all's well ! "

" Number two, all's well ! "

" Number three, all's well ! "

Then faintly in the distance of the gardens, " Number four, all's well ! " Forty-five gentlemen of the corps had fallen in the confused fighting of these last two days ; many more had been sent away by yacht, or by road with messages on the business of the State. How we grudged every man who was taken away from guarding Margaret. We all had our private troubles—those who were dear to us did not escape ruin and hunger, and one trooper who visited his home, came back to the Palace insane. These matters we kept to ourselves, but there was an understanding in the mess that each man must keep his life at our Lady's service so long as she had need of the Guard.

This had been midsummer day, the longest in all the year ; but Margaret was at work from dawn to dusk, and her Ministers had barely time for food.

The Departments of State found themselves quarters in the Palace, and the Postmaster-General contrived the telegraphs, some sort of money was

arranged for the public—what kind of currency mattered nothing now. A power station was got to work in the Midlands so that electric shipping was able to take the air. The Fleet reserve was mobilized, and the royal yacht squadron assembled. The railways were seized, and a service of trains commenced. The Imperial army began to concentrate upon London, regiment after regiment, brigade after brigade being quartered and fortified to protect the main supplies of food.

And so her Majesty began to reign. The fallen lifted their eyes, those who despaired ventured to think and to hope, those who were weak had strength to work for her, the wounded forgot their pain, the stricken their bereavement, the mourners their dead, and dying England lived for Margaret.

"Number one, all's well!"

"All's well."

"All's well."

"All's well."

Was our Lady asleep there in her corner? The trooper from his furthest side of the pavement, glanced through the corner of one eye, just daring to see her white robe shine against the black of his cloak upon the flags. He had not courage to really look at her, even if she slept, but paced his beat slowly from end to end, nine paces, and nine paces, inventing conversation all the time in which he made her seem to speak to him.

Somebody was coming up within the tower, and Browne at the stairhead waited ready to fire. A man?—the trooper boiled over at his insolence. Sir Myles Strangford, indeed!

"Get down," he whispered hoarsely. "Our Lady is here. Get down with you!"

"Who is it?" asked her Majesty. "What—Sir Myles? Don't go."

"Madam, forgive me," Sir Myles bowed to her. "I didn't know. Let me retire."

"No, stay, Sir Myles."

"Madam," he bowed again, "I couldn't sleep."

"Nor I. Come, sit in the shelter here and talk to me."

The Secretary for War sat down at our Lady's feet. "Tried to drug myself," he said frankly; "daren't take another drop—and sleep! How could I sleep?"

"It's not for you or for me," said Margaret. "'And so He giveth His beloved sleep'—only His beloved, you see—not for us."

"Madam, I can't stand it; I won't stand it," he spoke in breathless haste. "I don't care if you kill me for saying it. This declaration of war is impossible."

"I expelled Prince Alexander from the Palace; I gave the Ambassadors from Russia, France and Germany all their passports; I recalled my Ambassadors; I declared war," she turned upon the statesman. "You, Sir Myles, have the frankness and courage to protest, and you had the loyalty to obey."

"I behaved like a madman," he cried. "The Fleet is lost, the army is perishing."

"And the nation," said Margaret, "tearing itself to pieces. See there—all that—look; those are my people murdering each other like mad beasts! What

would my fathers, the Kings, have done with them? Do I love my people less than those old kings who called with the bale fires and the trumpets—To arms! To arms! Bring your swords and save England! To-night, Sir Myles, all over the length and breadth of the Kingdom, my trumpets and bugles are sounding the call to arms. The old, old patriotism—the dear love never fails. There will be no factions to-morrow, but England, Britain, the Empire, ready to fight for the flag!"

"And you a woman! Madam!"

"And I, a woman, Sir Myles. I am something come down through many centuries—flesh and bone, blood and nerves, soul, spirit, made that I may suffer for my people. I am not a statesman, not a man, but a weak, miserable woman—and I am England. I know you may think it madness to declare war with the League, having neither Fleet nor troops—I know! Come, put it to the proof. No fleet, you say? The ports are jammed with deep-sea shipping, the arsenals crowded with good aerial ships of the Fleet reserve, the country teems with yachts of the royal yacht squadrons."

"But, madam, the very Formula of the Fleets was betrayed."

"We can change the Formula now."

"But the power station is gone."

"We'll use the mercantile stations."

"But the Fleets of the League! Madam, this is sheer madness."

"Sir Myles; call it madness. You will remember that Brand's ships in every part of the Kingdom were seized by Ulster's orders."

" I remember, madam."

" I never forgot. Brand is my servant, and do you think I have let his sailors starve to death in my prisons? No. The General Superintendent of Prisons, by my direct commands, had loads of provisions supplied to feed those men. I have saved them alive. You remember that Ulster seized one ship—the *Golden Hind?* "

" And became invincible! "

" God is invincible," said Margaret.

" Madam, how many ships? "

" I have eleven—the crews are released to-night; the ships will assemble here at sunrise. How are the Fleets of the League to fight etheric rams? "

XIX

THE TALE OF THE DUN HORSE

Now for the tale of the Dun Horse, and Lancaster's great ride from Lyonesse.

There was no electric power for travel either by airship, road, or rail. It was hard without money to buy petrol for a car, or drive one over the broken roads, of districts where there was fighting. A big bay mare brought Lancaster through Cornwall, and fell dead at his farm near Tiverton in Devon, the place where the dun horse lived.

Oregon's colour was like the tawny, sunscorched grass of the great American Desert from whence he came. Such lion-coloured hide had hidden his ancestors from the ranging tigers, three hundred thousand years ago when the world was young. Down the back and across withers and shoulders ran dark brown stripes—the famous endurance lines, making the figure of the cross. This, again was a cast-back to a Zebra-striped ancestry of a hundred thousand generations gone. He stood fifteen hands, a pony like Alexander's Bucephalus or Napoleon's grey Marengo. His eyes were mad, his ears vicious, his hoofs hard as iron, his gait a rolling lope, tail and mane all streaming gold, his neck august, his pride untameable. It stirs one's blood to remember Oregon.

The dawn was breaking when Lancaster saddled the dun stallion ; and that was the third day of the gale, and burning of London, the Fifteenth of the Terror.

In all their rainwashed length, the roads showed scarcely any sign of traffic, but Oregon shied at many a car lying abandoned by the wayside, at the skeletons of cattle slaughtered and stripped to the last ounce of meat by bands of starving outlaws from the towns, sometimes at some poor shapeless heap in the ditch which had to be passed at full speed. Trees had been blown down across the causeway, branches and leafage littered by the gale. That which was fallen lay. In the hollow lands the road was washed out or flooded, the newly mown hay lay swamped in the sodden fields, and the young crops beaten flat. The farmers were roughly fortified—every place where there was food had become a stronghold, and the live-stock driven out to pasture went always under an armed guard for fear of marauders. In these days, the folk knew why their old and long-neglected churches had been so built upon high ground, with such defensible towers to carry balefires, and loopholed belfries for alarm bells. The village churches returned to their ancient use as forts of refuge both for body and spirit. That is why Lancaster found the village streets abandoned, and the streets of the market towns a solitude.

The ages had rolled back, from the twentieth century even to the tenth ; once again upon the lawless highways the robber bands were out to pillage and burn. Once again all honest men went armed, the farms were strongholds, the churches forts of

refuge. Once again an English knight rode a war-horse of the ancient kind, wore the old chain mail, fought with a lone sword, and dared all for a lost cause.

Have the red roses of Lancaster ever failed from the thorns of our gardens? Has the royal blood ceased to throb in English hearts? The ancient roots are still alive to-day, through decades of centuries the time-honoured chivalry of this dear realm flowers perennial from the ancient soil. The English archers, the English mariners, the English engineers—time changes the instruments, not the English hand. And that the heir apparent of the Imperial Throne rode three hundred miles in forty hours, is testimony that England is England still beyond the accident of the centuries.

Lancaster had been badly hurt in the fight with the *Gigantic*, and now, after eleven days of neglect, the wrench and bad contusions on his near shoulder made him delirious with pain.

Ranges of hills to cross, and floods to ford, by dip and curve, by tortuous-winding vales, field, woodland, park, and moor, the road went swinging on. There were cathedral cities by the way, great country seats, commons of golden gorse, old road-side inns, orchard-screened villages. The young Prince saw nothing but the course, felt nothing but his pain, knew nought but his errand, his mission to the Queen. Wet to the skin he felt no cold or any discomfort from the lashing rain, but in his fever and delirium, dreamed, talked to himself, crooned songs, or followed imaginary hounds. He could not remember afterwards how he found the way, where he had baited Oregon, where fed or rested.

It was sunset when he cantered down through Reading, the dun horse reeling—and forty miles to go. Red shone the glare through a gap in the wind-torn clouds, red was the glow on mire-stained horse and man, red on the sky to eastward where London lay. Two hours later he had traversed the outer suburbs and entered Windsor. Still was the red glow lingering in the east. He was passed through the castle gate and in the outer ward he rested Oregon. The Governor held his stirrup when he left, the Governor's wife gave him a stirrup cup, the poor knights of Windsor—seventeen old men, sending their message of love to Margaret.

So Lancaster crossed the Thames and entered London. The dun horse kept his splendid rolling lope, but drooped his head and jarred his rider now—with yet another twenty miles to go. The elms of Eton were swaying overhead, there were the playing fields, yonder the school—and Lancaster's heart was singing. As Oregon splashed by, he waved his helmet—a red gleam caught the silver. He turned into a long, dark avenue, villas on either hand, screened by young plane trees—lightless, desolate. Then followed mile after mile of town more lonely than the fields; street after street, dead, silent, horrible, and always the red glow quickened in the east. Was it the dawn already, the dawn breaking on an abandoned world?

Out of the vague night ahead, massed roofs went up stark to the flushed red jagged driving clouds, when a man started out of the shadows close ahead—an old grey man in a priest's cassock, brandishing a red-edged crucifix. Oregon

shied ; then, under lash of spurs, reared up pawing the air.

"Beware!" shrieked the priest. "Beware! Babylon is fallen—Babylon the Great is fallen—is fallen! The scarlet whore reigns yonder, and vengeance descends from Heaven on her crimes. You're riding headlong to destruction! Back!"

The trooper lashed his horse with the flat of his sword, and far away behind him heard the cry, "Babylon is fallen—is fallen!"

The pools were red, the mire was red, the wide street red as blood under an immensity of glowing, rolling smoke, and ever in front the near horizons lifted against great heaps of flame. Down a bye-street to the left a house burned furiously, but the pavement in front of it was empty. Hollow echoes rang to the horse's tramp, but the vacant silence ahead showed never a sign of man. Was the lost capital wholly abandoned?

Here a row of shops had been sacked, their wares thrown wide across the roadway. Beyond, the street was blocked with acres of ruins, and circling round back ways to find a passage, Lancaster heard gun shots, saw the flicker of torches ; then, turning a corner, came suddenly upon a blood-stained drunken mob plundering houses. Spoil was scattered everywhere ; dead men and drunk sprawled on the litter ; tables were spread upon the pavement ; orators were wrangling over their wine—a Republican court in session for the trial of three gentlewomen, who stood in drenched night-robes lashed together with ropes.

Lancaster charged that court, rode the judges under, cut them down, forgot his message to the

Queen, forgot the saving of the gentlewomen, vaguely supposed that the fight was a dream to be enjoyed, and went on slaughtering. He was surrounded, he was attacked on all sides; men were firing upon him from the houses on all sides—then something struck off his helmet, blinding his eyes, and Oregon, maddened with the burning pain of a torch against his flank, broke away screaming at a headlong gallop.

* * * * *

The empty street reached away between gaunt, enormous ruins under a sky of flame and roaring thunder, when Lancaster reined Oregon to a walk, borne slowly forward by a hurricane of wind; wiped the blood from his eyes, and, looking about him, knew that this was Knightsbridge. A body of cavalry swung down through the gates of the park, wheeled half-right, and broke to a trot directly athwart his course, their silver armour glowing with ruby light—a squadron of the Guard.

* * * * *

"Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell. For wickedness is in their dwellings."

Miss Temple was reading at our Lady's bedside, and her voice went on slowly, monotonously through the terrible minatory Psalms.

"Break their teeth, O God, in their mouths. Break out the great teeth of the young lions."

"Dear me," said Margaret, in her pillows; "how dreadfully uncomfortable."

"Not asleep yet?" asked the old woman, reproachfully.

" Not asleep yet " ; Margaret uttered a quivering sigh. " Please, dearest, draw all the curtains back. If I could see the windows, I wouldn't think I was in the grave—that would be better."

Miss Temple laid her Bible reverently aside ; then moving slowly across the room, drew back the curtains. The wreck of Whitehall had shattered all the glass, and now the windows were filled with oiled paper. The scarlet glare of the night shone fiercely in, the wind of the fire roared like a storm at sea. Miss Temple came back to her place, and our Lady reached out one shaking hand to feel a little comfort from her touch.

" Dearest," she whispered, " do you believe in ghosts ? "

" We are forbidden," answered the governess, " to have any dealings with the departed."

" Hush, dearest ; there's no need to be rude to these poor spirits, wrenched so suddenly fron their bodies, taken all by surprise, shy at appearing undressed as it were, and they come here to see if their Queen cares. They come and go all night long, my dead ; and they would think me so heartless if they found me asleep. I must not speak to them—that would be wrong—but they may hear me telling you that I care—I care—I care, and they will tell all the dead that I care."

" Child," said Miss Temple, fearfully, " don't think of such things. It's horrible."

" That they should die, and I not even mourn ? You wouldn't have me a coward, dearest, would you ? If I didn't care, if I didn't mourn, why all these millions of the dead would come to haunt

me, to accuse me. Am I not guilty of their blood!"

"You saved the honour of England."

"And at what a price! What is the honour of England! It's like some awful heathen god, whose altar runs with blood, the blood of innocent men, and women like you and me, and little children. How can you talk of our honour! I wish—how I wish—if I had only known. If it were all to do again I'd let Ulster sell us body and soul to Russia, drag our honour in the mud, set up our shame where every one could see, and call the shame salvation. Yes, I would rather marry Alexander, or be torn to pieces, or burned at the stake, than pay the price of honour."

When Miss Temple needed guidance, it was her custom to open her Bible, take a passage at random, and then with fiendish ingenuity twist the text into agreement with her own views. From the most unpromising materials she got the most surprising results. Now the pages fell apart in II. Samuel, and when her eye lit upon "*Elhanan the son of Dodo,*" with a small local directory to follow, she felt rather ill-used. Turning resentfully, she came upon the pedigree in I. Chronicles. She had to fall back on general principles, and flashed her indignant eyes on Margaret.

Margaret was asleep. All curled up, her dear head resting on one outstretched arm, fairily delicate she lay at peace. The lines of sorrow were smoothed away, her eyes—a moment ago so big, so dark with horror—were veiled now with the eyelids of a child. Down through the lurid shadow of the room,

flamelight played and flickered, glowed on the ivory pallor of her skin, and made a dainty mimicry of health. She seemed the Margaret of other days, Queen of the May, our Lady of the Spring, before love kindled and grief aged her heart.

Hush! The child sleeps, and the woman must wake to pain.

If you would know the measure of a woman, judge not by her virtues, neither by her sins—God will judge these. How much did she love? How much did men worship her? The love that men bore to Helen, Cleopatra, Guinevere, illumine the history of nations, as it changed the rhythm of their times. How have men worshipped Elizabeth, and Victoria, and Margaret, each in her time, the Queen of all men's love? The conquerors laid Empires at their feet. The holy ideal of chivalric worship inspired the noblest literature, the highest art and the profoundest learning. Whole eras are illuminated by the glamour and the glory of such unselfish homage, that could bind men together, sweeten the common life, sanctify duty, and make death a rite.

Hush! England sleeps! The spirits of the slain, hovering in the flamelight and the lurid green-grey shadows, are pleading to God that He will have compassion on the Queen.

With savage satisfaction, Miss Temple watched. Margaret asleep at last! For a minute, for two minutes, then our Lady's voice rang loud through the room.

"Lyonesse!" she cried. "Lyonesse!" And starting broad awake, lifted herself in the bed, her gaunt face beaded with sweat, her dark eyes staring

broad awake. Then she fell back with a moan, and clutched at Miss Temple's hands, and held them fast.

"Oh, why did you let me sleep?" she whispered. "I fought so hard to keep awake."

"You must have sleep or you'll lose your senses, child."

"I dared not sleep," said Margaret, trembling, "lest I should see him dead!"

"Margaret, these fancies are dangerous."

"This is the fourth time, dearest. He was in a little ship, so small you could have put it in this room, and far down underneath, river, and lake, and forest streaming past. He was all alone, the blood-stained bandage loose about his head, and he lay in his harness dead, except for his eyes. Only his eyes were alive watching me, speaking to me."

Miss Temple read the rest in Margaret's eyes, and turned her face away lest the Queen should see.

Even as the desert hungers for the rain, so Margaret craved for Brand. She could not tell Miss Temple that she loved him; the wise old governess pretended not to know, and thus the secret was shared by two sweet women with delicate reticence and understanding, marred by no words while every word would hurt.

"Dearest," our Lady whispered, "did you ever love?"

"Love!" Miss Temple's eyes went red. "What's love to me? Is this a time to think of love—to talk of love? Get to your prayers, child, this is no time for love."

But our Lady urged her again. "Dearest, were you ever in love?"

"In Heaven," Miss Temple was angry, "there's neither marrying nor giving in marriage. *The sun will be darkened, the moon shall not give her light, the powers of Heaven shall be shaken, the earth shall quake, the mountains shall fall, the heavens shall roll away like a scroll before the great and terrible day of the Lord.* This is a time for fasting, vigils, humiliation, prayer, not for profane thoughts of love."

Margaret lay back among the pillows, releasing Miss Temple's hand.

"I'm tired," she said, "so tired."

Then of a sudden she started up alert, listening intently, her eyes upon the door, at which the old lady grumbled, asking what was the matter.

"Don't you hear?"

"The roar of fire, child, there's nothing else."

"But I hear somebody coming—hush—listen."

"The fall of some building perhaps."

"There's somebody coming for me. I tell you somebody is coming—from Lyonesse—from him. Hark! There are footsteps."

"Trooper Browne in the corridor. Be still, child; lie down and rest."

But indeed there were footsteps, sounds of scuffling, of men disputing, and then the throwing open of a door. Through the length of the suite of rooms, Browne's voice rang out in warning.

"Madam," he shouted, "I could not hold him back!"

Men were trampling heavily through the rooms; even as her Majesty came down from the bed, the door of her chamber burst open—a man came reeling

in, a trooper of the Guard, although his silver armour, rusted black, was drenched and stained with rain and mire, his face a mask of blood. He shouted hoarsely at the sight of her, then two Guardsmen following caught him in their arms, but he, struggling violently, broke away from them and fell at her very feet insensible.

Her Majesty knelt down beside the man, and full of pity lifted his bleeding head.

Sergeant Branscombe, standing at the salute, begged for the Queen's forgiveness.

"Madam," he pleaded, "we could not hold him back."

But she, in her white robe kneeling beside the man, pressed her small hands upon the spurting wound.

"Who is he?" she asked, "Oh, surely not—my cousin, Lancaster! He will die! He will die!"

"He is alive," Miss Temple's hands pressed hard upon his breast. "Quick, Sergeant Branscombe, water. You, trooper, bring the surgeon. What's this?" She found a strip of paper under the gorget. "A letter! Margaret, this is from Lyonesse!"

And Margaret read the message.

"In five days more I'll come with my ships.

"JOHN BRAND."

XX

VICTORY

"In five days more I'll come with my ships."

Five days had passed since Brand's promise reached the Queen, it was the twenty-first of the Terror, and the master was not come.

Trooper Browne had been on duty all night, slept through the morning, and now at two in the afternoon came hungry to the mess-room for luncheon. The tables were gone since daybreak, surgeons and nurses had taken possession, the pavement, the aisles, even the triforium gallery, were crowded with the beds of the sick and the dying taken from the streets. In the ante-chamber he found some biscuits, and with these and a glass of water fled to the guard-room.

That beautiful gallery was at least unchanged, its precious columns of azurite and malachite reflected in the polished slabs of the floor. The alabaster stairs came up from the portico, and went on to the chambers of state, now turned into hospital wards and Government offices. One man was on guard, Sergeant Jack Branscombe, fat, lazy old Jack sole garrison of the Palace, and him Browne relieved that he might get his breakfast. So the trooper sat on a bench eating biscuits, and watched the

endless procession of sufferers being carried past upon the stairway.

One man on guard! Of the two hundred gentlemen-at-arms, and their two hundred orderlies, only seventy were left—all as brothers now—to ride with her Majesty. She would come back with her riders at four o'clock, tired out, and here on the table stood a gold cup, and a flagon of wine left by Miss Temple, for our Lady's refreshment.

Stealthily Browne lifted the cup, and pressed his lips against the rim. Even as he did that a little chuckle sounded close at his elbow—so startlingly like our Lady's laugh that he set down the cup in haste.

"Caught red-handed," said Tom of Lancaster, and sitting down on the bench, laid a white hand on Browne's knee. "My dear Browne, you must not poison her cup, even with kisses."

Browne grinned nervously. "Good morning, sir," he said, his eyes on Lancaster's deathly white face, "the doctor said you'd be in bed for months."

"Doctor's a fool," said Lancaster, then very faintly added—"Give me some of that wine."

Browne drank the water in his glass, and filled it with wine from the flagon.

"Here, sir."

"Drop that 'sir,'" said the young Prince, then with a sigh as he set down the empty glass, "How is she to-day?"

"Slept heartily these four nights, so Miss Temple says. She looks herself again since you came, Prince, with your message."

"Prince! I wish you fellows would drop that

rot, and let me be a trooper. My name's Tom, and I'm as good as any man in the crowd. So the message cheered her up ? "

" Saved her reason, I think."

" Browne," the Prince turned round with a short, sharp laugh, " you're in love with her. Bah, you flush like a girl—of course, you're in love with her. So am I, man, and the rest of the fellows are just as bad or worse. What's the use of trying to hide what hurts. Does it make the thing hurt less ? She's not for us.

" She and Brand are in love, and by my honour, Browne, I'm glad, yes glad. That man is royal, the real thing, which I'm not. By our Lady, if you'd seen him fight the *Gigantic !*

" And all that time in the cave, six mortal days while he lay raving mad with his wound, he called to her : ' Margaret ! Margaret ! ' Look what he was before, and what he's fallen to because he was loyal."

" In love with him," said Browne, under his breath.

" Of course she is, I saw them part. Didn't she burst into tears, so that she had to run away."

" The message," Browne's voice was broken now ; " it saved her reason. I thought—— "

" The message," said Lancaster, " I forged that message."

" Forged it ? "

" Of course. How could I come to her without a message ? That's what Brand would have written if he could. Do you think it was easy for me bringing that message ? "

" I'd never have dared," said Browne, humbly. " Fancy lying to her ! "

" Well, I'm her cousin, you know, and you'd have dared all right if you had been there. He was conscious, the fever gone—awful weak, of course, and he couldn't have written a letter to save his life. I did it out of my own head, too, and I hate writing letters. That night I climbed the cliff, and at the top found a young fisherman asleep. The man was in hiding, a criminal, I suppose ; but he helped me, and we got Brand up with ropes. Neither of us knew that Ulster was dead, or that the royal yacht was out searching for Brand, or that Lyonesse was retaken for the Queen. I found out all that afterwards.

" All we knew was that Brand must escape from England ; and he told me to search for a shed, close by where his cottage used to stand. Inside the shed we found a little old ship, the first one that Brand's father ever built, the mother of the Fleet."

" What, the *Experiment ?* I've read about that."

" Yes, the *Experiment ;* she was in perfect order, and we got her alive within the hour. I begged Brand to take the fisherman or me, but he would have neither of us. The fisherman must search for Miss Brand, he said, and take her a message. I must go to the Queen. Then he began to get delirious."

" You let him go like that ! "

" He cheated me—said I could come with him, but first I must coil up the rope—he wanted the rope. While I was coiling up the rope the port clanged home, the ship rose with a whirr, drawing up a hurricane of dust and stones. I was dragged off my

feet into the air, then fell nearly over the edge of the cliff. He was gone!"

"To his death," said Browne.

"Who knows?"

"And she believes that message!"

"I had to confess to some one," said Lancaster, dolefully. "Hello, here's old Branscombe. What's the trouble, Jack?"

"Thought you'd gone back to bed, sir."

"Bed be damned," said Lancaster, cheerfully. "Why that bereaved smile? More bad news?"

Fat Jack sat down panting, leaning his hands on his sword.

"Bad news? Well, sir, that's hardly the word, we're a little nearer the end, perhaps." He watched the long procession of the sick—borne one by one on stretchers up the stairway. "I'd rather the end came quick."

"Oh, go and be an angel," said Lancaster, scornfully. "Go and croak at the moon, Jack, weep to the clouds all alone on a damp battlement. We've had more fun and adventure this last month."

Browne laughed heartily.

"Well," old Branscombe smiled at the two lads; "I suppose I'm a fool," he wheezed. "Just now I was talking with one of our wounded men—Bill Sothern. He saw the whole Republican army in camp, two hundred and fifty thousand men at least, the pick of the Midland counties, well fed, in fine condition, and our poor half-starved troops, what can they do? How could our Lady so much as offer battle. The thing was hopeless—she was right to decline. Well, to-day, the Republican colours are

flying on Hampstead Hill. To-morrow, their flag will be hoisted here."

"Come," said Lancaster, "cheer us up—go on, Jack."

"I wonder"—Jack grunted, looking steadily at the Prince. "You, sir, may be pleased. I'm of a different make. The French and German armies landed yesterday, covering the coast from Dungeness to Portsmouth—half a million men, with two hundred ships of the line to sweep our army away as they advance."

"Anything more?" asked Tom of Lancaster.

"The Russian Fleet has appeared off the coast of Essex."

Lancaster was whistling softly. "'Three blind mice—three blind mice; see how they run.' Well, Jack, I'll lay you three to one in anything you like on Margaret."

"In my country," said Browne, yawning, "the sun goes down in the fall of the year and never comes up again. The Arctic Sea is all shifting ice pack, the land all white drifts, and you think the night is never going to end. Yet it does; the sun comes up in the spring, and the mosquito season begins. Perhaps things will come out all right even in this England."

"Perhaps," answered Branscombe. "How long is it, Browne, since you joined the Guard—you're only a recruit, eh?"

"Thirty-one days and thirty-one nights," said Browne, "and it feels like thirty-one years. Another month of your London will make me a doddering old patriarch."

"Another month?" Branscombe rose and walked away with a sigh.

"Another month!" echoed young Lancaster.

"Why, gentlemen," came a voice from the upper stairway. "Are the Queen's Blackguards so far gone as that? All out of curl, no swagger—like a covey of widows?"

Lancaster turned with an acid smile to the civilian.

"Who the deuce are you?"

"I have the honour," said the civilian grinning, "to be her Majesty's Chief Poisoner."

Lancaster whispered to Browne. "Another bounder come to cheer me up. Well," he turned to the civilian. "Tell us all the bad news, there's still room for a fourth invading army from the west."

The Chief Poisoner lighted a cigarette, sat down, crossed his legs and chuckled.

"Don't mind me," said the Prince.

"What!" the civilian started to his feet. "I beg your Royal Highness—I mean, sir—I didn't——"

"Sit down," said the Prince. "Tell lies, we need amusing. Proceed, my Lord Chief Poisoner."

"Oh—ah—well, sir," the Poisoner smiled and writhed. "I have good news, sir, and at last I'm at liberty to speak. I had the honour to hear you mention, sir, the armies of the invasion."

"Yes, sir."

"They can't march on London without roads and railways, and they depend, sir, more or less on the country for supplies—of water, for instance."

"Water?"

"The first of all necessities. The Franco-German forces, as you know, sir, have landed on the coast of Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire. Now in these three counties, her Majesty has called out the Territorials, and ordered them to retreat on London sweeping the whole population before them, driving the live-stock in to feed the capital, burning all provisions and ricks that couldn't be moved. The railways have been mined, and the roads blocked with felled timber and mines. Yesterday I had the honour to direct the poisoning of every well, pond, and running stream. Her Majesty sends word advising the enemy that she will supply pure water when the troops lay down their arms."

"But they can march across?"

"Yes, sir, they can march across without transport or artillery, or food, or water, to attack the fortified positions on the north downs. Meanwhile the live-stock and provisions are restoring life and hope to the armies and citizens in London."

"You mean to say," cried Lancaster, "that the Queen has done all that in five days?"

"It's seven days since her Majesty seized the Government."

"How about the Russian landing in Essex?"

"I'm not at liberty to speak as yet."

"I see," Lancaster had both hands to his bandaged head. "But there are still the enemy's Fleets."

Browne chuckled.

"Hello," Lancaster flashed round on him. "Who told you to laugh?"

"Something," said Browne, "about eagles and

bones out of the Bible—wish I could remember what Miss Temple did say. She reviewed them yesterday."

"Miss Temple held a review? Well, I'll be boiled!"

"No," Browne was irritable, "our Lady, of course, reviewed the What-d'ye-call-um's ships—Brand's ships—eleven of them."

"You're dreaming, Browne."

"It's no dream," said Browne. "Our Lady has kept the crews alive in gaol; she's got the squadron together, reviewed them yesterday, and she's going to send them against the enemy's fleets. They've got some sort of vibrations for touching off explosives, but none of their captains ever heard of these vibrations, and Brand is the only man who knows the secret. That seems to trouble our Lady."

"Vibrations be damned," said Lancaster, hotly. "I know all about etheric ships. Wasn't I in the *Mary Rose* when we rammed the *Gigantic?* Brand's ships are rams, and they'll go through an electric battleship like a shell through a paper balloon. Eleven rams like that could wipe out all the electric fleets of Europe. Why with the fleets destroyed and the country impassable——"

Browne yelped with delight.

"Here," cried Lancaster, "Jack Branscombe, you old fool. I'll bet you every horse in my stables, bar Sharon and the Dun—against your spotted dog, our Lady wins the game!"

Branscombe had been listening at the stairhead, now he rolled over to Lancaster.

"I can't," he panted. "I can't bet against our Lady."

"That the League don't capture London—my horses against your beastly spotted cur."

"Your horses are a scandalous lot of crocks, and I wouldn't have them at a gift; but done, sir! and I hope you'll win my dog."

"And so do I!"

The voice, our Lady's voice, came thrilling clear from the head of the lower stairway, at which the three Guardsmen sprang to attention, and the civilian bolted. So her Majesty came forward attended by her retinue of the Guard, and wearing her uniform as its captain.

Branscombe provided her a seat, Browne, kneeling, presented the cup of wine, the escort, breaking ranks, piled arms and awaited her pleasure.

"There," she said, laughing. "I'm tired enough to love my home. Stand forward, Sergeant Branscombe," said our Lady, and her eyes twinkled, for she dearly loved a jest. "You are charged with betting one spotted dog against your sovereign."

Branscombe prayed for the pavement to swallow him.

"I had no more," he stammered.

"One spotted dog or fifty, the same crime, Sergeant. I condemn you to quarter on your shield of arms a spotted dog proper bearing the legend: 'I am Lancaster's.' And you, Tom of Lancaster, get to bed, and behave yourself on pain of a severe course of mustard plasters—off with you! Gentlemen," she raised her cup, "I pledge the Guard."

We heard a trumpet blown outside the gates, and at the sound our Lady let the cup fall, watching it roll slowly across the floor.

"Go down," she said, "Gentlemen of 'B' squadron—receive this visitor—pay him all possible honour, and bring him here."

A dozen men, those of "B" squadron, parted from the rest, saluted, formed, and marched clattering down the long stairs. The procession of the sick and their bearers ceased. Then one could only hear the impatient horses stamping in the porch. We looked at our Lady, and saw that she was afraid.

'I want to warn you, gentlemen," she said faintly. "That trumpet was blown for the President of the British Republic—yes, the Republic. He has come to receive my surrender."

"Kill him! Kill him!" cried some, and every man in the chamber was moved to break away from the Queen's discipline.

"Gentlemen," said our Lady. "President O'Brien comes under flag of truce. If you are offended now, you will be furious when you hear his demands, and if you love me, you will stand quite still, except to salute him at his entrance. I warn you the slightest hostile movement may ruin me. My envoys have failed to treat with this man, my letters met with an insulting reply, and he holds North London in overwhelming force. Ah, here he comes. Don't be uneasy, I assure you I'm not going to surrender."

The President, attended by his staff, conducted by our troopers, came to the stairhead and there stood surveying our Lady and her war-stained Guard.

"Where is this woman?" he demanded hoarsely.

And in answer, Margaret rose to make him

welcome, met him half-way across the chamber, and frankly offered her hand.

"What," she asked gently, "will you not shake hands?"

General O'Brien lifted his eyes until they were level with her brave sad face.

"Won't you shake hands?" she said, "you come to me in my utmost need." Then addressing his retinue, "I am so glad to welcome friends."

"This is all nonsense, madam. I am not a friend."

"That," answered our Lady, "is incredible. You are doing yourself injustice. My enemies are Russians, Germans, French, not British. You could not possibly be leagued with my enemies. I have sent my messengers to welcome your reinforcements, cleared the northern suburbs to quarter your troops, begged for your counsel as to meeting the Russian advance, and now you come pretending enmity."

"I pretend nothing, madam. I come as President of the British Republic to occupy this Palace."

Margaret laughed at him. "My dear good man, I can't spare room for another cot, even for you. This hospital is jammed to the very doors with my poor guests, the sick. See through that archway"—she pointed to the entrance of the mess-room—"in that one ward there are seven hundred cases of typhus. Come, General O'Brien, I'm badly in need of ambulance, and you must help me."

"I will take charge of that," said the President, brusquely. "Meanwhile, madam, a special train is waiting to take you with your following to Balmoral."

Our Lady turned away from him, crossed to her

chair and sat down. She rested her elbows on her knees, her face in her hands, and looked up at this President thoughtfully.

"And so, General O'Brien," she said at last, "you want to sit in my throne, my most comfortless throne."

"I want no throne," answered General O'Brien, "I have come to put an end to this disastrous monarchy. I have no time for delay."

"And who are you?" Margaret lifted her proud head. "Who are you?"

"I command the armies of the Republic—three hundred thousand men."

"And I," said her Majesty, "command the nation, the feudatories, the colonies, the seas, the air—the British Empire. I am chosen by my people their anointed sovereign, guardian of their liberty, Defender of their Faith. The throne is not yours, General, or mine. It belongs to the people who make the laws, and we are their servants—their servants, General. When we have conquered the League, I will ask my people what kind of Government they want, who they will have as their President or their Sovereign. I will obey their orders, but, by God, not yours!"

"You propose to fight my armies?"

"No, I would not have one of my people hurt in such a quarrel. I have half a million men, to fight Russia, France, and Germany—not one to spare for you."

"What do you propose?"

A man had come to the head of the upper stairway, Sir Myles Strangford, Secretary for War.

"Where is the Queen?" he cried. "Gentlemen of the Guard, where is the Queen? I have great news—victory! victory! Our squadron of etheric rams has met the Franco-German fleets. Victory! Victory!"

How the Guard cheered!

Then her Majesty sent for Sir Myles, and he was brought to her.

"Tell me," she said, laughing as he kissed her hand, "who is this General O'Brien? He claims to be the President of some Republic."

Sir Myles looked up towards General O'Brien and laughed also.

"Does he offer, madam, to meet the etheric rams in battle?"

"Woman," cried General O'Brien, "I am not here to be insulted—surrender, or I shall take this Palace by assault."

"You would assault a hospital!"

Margaret rose from her seat, went over to the President, and, slowly drawing her sword—

"You would assault a hospital!" The sword whirled above her head, and with the flat of the blade, she struck heavily upon his shoulder. "Sir George O'Brien," she cried, "are you my knight, or are you my enemy? Take your choice."

"What do you mean?" he retorted in fury.

"I mean that you are knighted in my service, and commissioned Lieutenant-General to meet the Russian invasion, or that you draw your sword, Mr. O'Brien, and fight."

"This is an outrage!"

"Take it as an outrage, Mr. George O'Brien,

rebel. It's easy enough to assault hospitals, easy enough to send brave men to their death. You have three hundred thousand soldiers, I half a million; but I cannot spare one life in either army—I can spare you. What's that sword at your side? Is it only an ornament? Have you no courage beyond assaulting hospitals? Draw, you coward, and fight!"

Here, Dymoke, as Champion of England, demanded leave to engage, but our Lady waved him aside, being in no mood for interference. As to General O'Brien, he was not so eager.

"I cannot possibly fight you. This is madness!"

"Sir, choose your own weapons, broadsword or rapier; I value my life less than I value yours. There's no room for both of us in the world. Draw, or I'll kill you. Draw, I say, draw!"

"I do not fight with women."

"A man then! Gentlemen of the Bodyguard, he demands a man! Choose your antagonist, sir, for fight you shall!"

"I refuse to fight!"

"Then," said one of the Generals of the staff, "I serve under no coward. I am a gentleman, your Majesty," he crossed to her rear. "I am at your Majesty's service."

In another minute President O'Brien stood alone, his staff gone over to the Queen.

"I accept the inevitable," he said, angrily. "I accept the position of Lieutenant-General in your Majesty's service."

"This coward," Margaret turned upon the Generals, pointing with her sword to the late President,

" this coward proposes to serve in my armies. I send no cowards against my gallant enemies of the League. Which of you gentlemen holds highest rank in the Republican forces ? "

General McNeill saluted.

" 'Tis to you, then, sir, I shall entrust my campaign against Russia. You will consult with Sir Myles Strangford and receive my commands through him. As to this coward here, I entrust him to your custody as a prisoner. I order you to have him thrashed for cowardice in presence of the army he was unfit to lead."

The Republic was at an end.

Mr. Dymoke was furious. " What's the use," he said afterwards. " What's the use of being Hereditary Champion of England if I can't have somebody to kill ? I was cheated out of my fight with Prince Ali, and here's the Queen herself getting in front of my rights."

He was to have his killing.

XXI

THE QUEEN'S RETREAT

FROM the time our Lady's actual reign began, we saw the ruined land stir into being. For money she gave us " Queen's promises," that is to say, the old coins of the realm, which her Majesty vowed to redeem at their former value. With these coins, after she made proclamation on the thirteenth of the Terror, wages were earned and paid, the traffic moved again, shops opened for trade, and factories went to work. It was all done in a timid way at first, then with more confidence, and at last in full flood of recovery.

For those still out of work, her Majesty founded the Administration of Hope. To the municipal councils she granted powers for seizure of provisions, employment of workers, and service of rations to them and to their families. So the dead were buried, the streets and roads were cleared, ships were discharged, the markets stocked with produce from the shires, and London was fortified.

She founded the Administration of Succour, opening pawnshops for the loan of money, hospitals for the sick, camps for the destitute, and a service of military transport.

So daily, hourly, the Queen's dominion spread

until the three kingdoms rang from end to end with feverish industry and courageous life.

It was all so gallantly done, and so hopeless. Nothing but the instant peril of invasion could have bound the people together while they were starving. The dying realm lived by her surgery, was healed, was saved, but then the price must be paid—and three armies were marching against the Capital. Our Lady's flotilla of rams shattered their covering fleets—but even etheric vessels could not charge battleships of the line without being injured ; caught in the bursting magazines, they were racked to pieces. The fleets of the League were destroyed, but of the three rams which survived not one could float again.

Four shires, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, and Essex, were laid waste, changed into desert where all the water was poisonous, but the armies of the invasion were only delayed until they could add tanks to their transport. Then the armies came against the outer defences of London—a web of hedges, ditches and canals, a labyrinth of suburbs which swallowed brigade after brigade, and sent back only wreckage of lost regiments. Our Imperial army was—ever since the beginning of the Twentieth Century—an army of marksmen—sharp-shooters who mowed down the poor conscripts of Europe, even as the swaths of wheat fell at the harvesting.

Behind her chain of fortresses our Lady was arming her people for defensive war ; mines, mills, and factories, villages and towns sent their contingents of men to be drilled in her camps ; the Midlands seethed with preparation of arms, and explosives ;

and every weapon capable of use added a man's strength to the great defence.

As Margaret called in her outposts, garrison troops came in daily from Halifax, Bermuda, Gibraltar, and were sent with their guns to the front.

France and Germany called up their fleet reserves, but the Mediterranean Squadron dealt with the French above Rouen, and turning eastward, caught the Germans in Hanover.

So the battle raged for weeks, over land and sea, but the vortex of this dread Armageddon was Margaret's Capital. The French army was in the outer southern suburbs, the Russians held the northern suburbs, the Germans were in the east, and the marshals of the invasion slowly mile by mile forced their way to the westward, closing down upon London. Another week would see the Metropolis surrounded, and the siege commenced. We knew that the end was near.

It was the bombardment of the East End which brought the council of war to plead with her Majesty for the desperate policy of retreat. They begged her to withdraw westward, to evacuate London, and, laying the land waste, fall balk upon the Midlands.

"Fall back!" said Margaret bitterly. "Gentlemen, I cannot understand your military terms, but if that means run—I won't!"

"Madam," Lord Fortescue had a valued gift of persuasion. "We want to run away, leading the enemy inland until we catch him in a trap."

"That sounds well," said our Lady, pursing

her lips doubtfully. "Are the traps always far inland?"

"Madam, if we are caught here in London, it means surrender."

"London, then, is a trap?"

"A perfect death-trap."

"A perfect death-trap." Margaret repeated the words doubtfully; then, like a flash—"If any army is caught in London, it means surrender!"

"Good gracious, madam!" exclaimed the Commander-in-Chief.

"Let me feel my way—perhaps it is nonsense. A million people are being shelled—murdered in the East End. Suppose we clear the East End—here, see on this map—from Stratford say, to Aldgate. I could send the women and children to Windsor Forest—they need a holiday, poor things. Any way we could spare that district to the Germans. Then there's the City and this West-Central district up to Charing Cross—a heap of ruins. We could spare all that to the Germans—enough room for them to lose their whole army. They would rush in to capture our main positions on the Hampstead and Sydenham Hills. They would find themselves in a low valley blocked with ruins, under the fire of a thousand guns, every line of escape blocked by our barricades, the river on their left too broad to swim. Then they would try to get back to their camps—and find their camps fortified with their own guns against them!"

"Madam!"

"My lord, have these Germans any mercy on my

poor women and children ? I want to capture their army."

" We couldn't possibly feed two hundred thousand prisoners."

" I want no prisoners, I want rifles for my reserves, Lord Fortescue, rifles and powder, and all the provisions in the German camps. As to the—— "

" Madam," said Strangford, " a couple of hundred thousand German prisoners sent as a present into the hungry Russian lines might,—well, Russia loves Germany none too well as it is."

But Lord Fortescue objected, protesting that London was full of foreign spies, and that we could never conceal our preparations."

" Permit me, madam," cried Strangford, eagerly. " My dear Lord Fortescue, here we have the complete plans for the evacuation of London. I could get the papers sold privately to the French, and we could so shape our preparations as to make the Allies believe we were in full retreat to the Midlands. Afterwards we shall have both Russians and Germans accusing the French of treachery. We shall split the League ! "

There is no need to tell again the story of our Lady's stratagem. During the five days of its preparation, the armies of the League closing down through the western suburbs, cut off all hope of retreat, all chance of succour. No help could reach us from the outer world, and lost in the valley of death, we could send no word to salve the fear of England, or to restrain despair. So much we lost.

Then came the thirty-ninth of the Terror, when

the German forces, a hundred and fifty thousand strong, marched into the capital.

From the Palace towers we watched the red sun rise, heard the first gun, and waited minute after minute until the silence became agony. Then came a sudden blaze from a thousand guns, the Palace reeled under the crash, and over the ruins of central London went up a cloud of dust. Of the German forces, thirty-one thousand men are supposed to have perished in that cloud, fifteen thousand escaped in panic flight, a hundred and four thousand prisoners were released starving into the hungry Russian lines.

Our Lady was pleased to dine that night with the Bodyguard. The tables, for lack of room elsewhere, had been set in the guardroom upon the alabaster stairs, and in her Majesty's honour we twined garlands of rose and laurel about the lamps, brought out the gold plate, and used some of that old, gracious pageantry which graced the bygone times. Outside, the guns were firing a salute, the bells of London pealed for victory, and our trumpets pealed as we rose to drink to the Queen. Then Sir Myles Strangford came, attended by his staff, and from the upper stairway read the report of our triumph.

"A hundred and fourteen thousand stand of arms, the German siege train, Woolwich Arsenal, three thousand wagons of military stores, twenty-two million rations——"

The harsh call of a bugle cut short his words, a quick, imperative summons at the very gates of the Palace. No English bugle was sounded in such a place.

When an attendant had been sent to make

inquiries, Sir Myles went on reading the proclamation of victory, news that would bring comfort to the besieged, hope to all Britain. His voice was fervent in thanksgiving; a storm of cheering drowned his closing words. Standing with drawn swords we sang the National Anthem, thinking most of us of the women folk at home, our mothers and sisters in danger, and our dread sovereign Lady whom we served. Then the song died on our lips, our swords drooped, and there was silence while a vague fear gripped us at the throat.

A Russian general officer had come up the stairway attended by a trooper bearing the white flag on a lance.

"Gentlemen," he said, in broken English, "I have the honour—I bear a letter to her Britannic Majesty."

His eyes followed ours as we directed him, and perhaps, after all, the Russians pleaded for an armistice. The Allies were ready to fly at each other's throats, there was hatred within the League more than against ourselves. And yet the Russian's bearing boded no good to us, and as our Lady read we saw her face turn grey.

She beckoned the envoy to retire—told him to await her pleasure at the gates, kept silence until he was gone.

"Strangford!" she cried, "Strangford! Come here!"

She thrust the paper into Strangford's hand, and we saw him too grow cold before our eyes.

"Madam," he groaned, "I fear this is the end."

"Gentlemen," our Lady lay back in her chair

very faint and ill. "Gentlemen of the Guard, you who have never failed me—never failed me," she started up, a new thought lighting her face. "You're the only men in the Empire who have not failed me. I appeal to you—I want ships—I want a squadron of ships. Help me! help me!"

Not a man moved, for how could we find her ships? We had given our yachts, those who had them, and had not failed her when our lives were needed—but ships! At the beginning the Channel Fleet was lost, but the fleets of the League were destroyed by etheric rams. The reserve fleets of France and Germany had been defeated by the Mediterranean Squadron. Victorious in a hundred aerial fights, the ships which remained to England were on guard, lest the French and Germans attempt a last attack. We dared not withdraw one cruiser lest our enemies take the air again—and that meant ruin. There was no squadron left even for the Queen's most vital need—or else the siege of London had been impossible. There were no ships.

A slow tear trickled down our Lady's face.

"We dared to hope," she said, "to hold out until Mr. Brand comes back—as he will come back! Oh, must he come too late?"

That was the most piteous thing of all, that our Lady still believed Brand would come back.

Sergeant Dymoke went to the Queen, and, bending his knee—

"Madam," he cried, "we are ready to go on fighting."

"How can we fight?" said Margaret angrily.

" What can we do against the Siberian Fleet ? Can we ride horses upon the clouds, charge nineteen battleships of the line with rifles, float up our fortress guns to fight the stars ? "

And all the bells of London were pealing for victory !

XXII

THE LAST BATTLE

MARS burned on the horizon; the six stars of Orion, the seven misty Pleiads, the eight suns of the Bear, and all the lamps of Heaven were shining steadfast. Suns spin their course, the constellations change, and all things pass, but yet eternal gleams the Milky Way spanning the night from everlasting unto everlasting—the perfect arch of God's restraining hand. We may lie down to rest in utter faith, for, with the failing glory of our day, the night reveals His visible providence. But those who cannot sleep most need His comfort, and our Lady Margaret kept vigil that last night.

From the high solitude of her tower, she watched the passing stars until the black ruins of the city loomed ragged against white dawn light. Ashen grey were the ruins of Mayfair to the north; gaunt and gigantic wrecks of Belgravia's palaces went up in white against the velvet west. The day was breaking—the last day of all. Mist lay beneath where all the Palace slept, and in the gardens the waking doves crooned softly. Far off in the south, trains rumbled at some junction of the rails; a car whirred in the Palace Road; an aerial yacht slid past in the western gloom, and London was alive.

The sun would come up presently; how few of all the thousands asleep in the Palace were destined to see him set! The trooper who stood by the parapet watching the pale light climb the eastern sky prayed with a boy's fervour that the sun might never rise. "Jehovah of the Thunders, Lord God of Battles, don't let that sun rise! Have pity; destroy the earth, hurl us away into the night, but don't let the sun rise upon Margaret's death—the end of human liberty, and all the glory of manhood that was England! Oh, stay the sun! Have mercy and stay the sun!"

The trooper knelt down, and, reaching out his arms towards the east, begged the Almighty Father to stay the sun.

Our Lady's voice broke in upon his silence. "Browne," she called, "Browne, come here to me, I need you."

He came, standing at the salute.

"Look to the west," said Margaret. "The light is growing—look to the west and tell me—are there any ships?"

He looked into the violet gloom, hung like a funeral curtain over the west, then his arm fell to his side, but he dared not answer.

"The armistice," said Margaret, "ends when the sun comes up—the three days' armistice—they would not give me more. Not just in the west, Browne," said our Lady, gently, "a little to the southward, look again. Lyonesse is a little south of west, above the copper beech tree down in the garden."

But still Browne answered nothing.

"Are you short-sighted, Browne?" asked Margaret, patiently, knowing that he was noted for long sight. "Or is the sky still dark over to westward?"

But he answered nothing.

"Or are you crying, Browne?"

The man threw himself suddenly at her feet and there lay until the dawn light found our Lady's face.

"If it were all to do again," she said; "and I knew what must come, seeing the future clearer than the past, and judging as God judges even to the end of Destiny—I wonder—should I have let my country be betrayed? Vassalage to Russia! No, I think not. Ulster betrayed me, and in that treason was the seed of all. Now we must reap where Ulster sowed the seed. I could not keep back the harvest, nor can we stop the sun from rising. It is not the rising of the sun which gives the signal to the Russian Fleet. The sun stands still in heaven—it is the earth that sets—man's world going down into this vassalage, into this Russian night.

"They wanted me to surrender, to lay down my arms, my crown, my kingdom, my religion; my Ministers and my Generals, all with one voice begged me to save my people, by surrender. They asked me to make my people subjects of Russia—they called that serving my people! I would rather they died free, and took their freedom into the life to come, going to their Master rich with honour—and not afterwards beggarly, and ashamed, whining like slaves.

"There is the Siberian Fleet," Margaret was

gazing upwards at the vast line of battle in the eastern sky. "When the sun reddens their wings, they will destroy my fortresses, murder my peopel, make the Thames run blood. My place is with my people—I am their Queen, and still I shall labour for them, pray for them in that other world, leading my spirit people, my free people. Then I shall leave no children on this earth borne of my shame, descended from British Kings to be vassals of Russia.

"But, oh, if only my people might be saved! Stand up again! Stand up—the sun is reddening the Russian Fleet. Stand up—look to the west—there must be ships in the west—his ships from Lyonesse! No ships! Still no ships! Let us go down and take our horses out; I shall die with my Guard to-day! I shall ride with my Guard, Beyond!"

* * * * *

"Fours right! Left wheel—by y'r left, march! Carry ar-r-r-ms!"

The old avenue lay ahead of us, the Mall, and as we rode out slowly past the Victoria Monument, our Lady looked back, once, lifting her hand in farewell—perhaps to Miss Temple on some balcony. Our wounded were with us, all who could keep the saddle, and Lancaster, still very weak, carried the Guidon of the Regiment. The early sunlight, dappled through green leaves, caught gold and scarlet, silver and blazonry; our horses played like great babies because of the dewy freshness in the air; and so we broke to a trot, every man with his eyes set straight to the front, his hand gently on the curb, his thoughts—so far away!

All round the white horizon, guns of position

thundered, shells burst, and spluttering rifles kept up the long monotony of battle, white dust went up, and rolling smoke, flame, and the souls of men.

A shell burst close beside us as we swung through St. James' Palace into Pall Mall, another, as we entered Waterloo Place, struck the Crimean Monument just ahead; but we breasted the hill in lower Regent Street between dead shuttered buildings all asleep, as though it were Sunday morning in times of peace.

We crossed the circus set round with familiar theatres, and hotels, their porches still bearing torn playbills on the columns, their cornices and domes just caught by the morning light.

A falling shell scattered the rear ranks and burst. Ambrose was killed, O'Hagan wounded, Joubert, the Transvaaller, was unhorsed. Drawing his sword, he saluted her Majesty, then set the point to his neck, drove the blade home, and fell. We rode on through the Quadrant, entering Regent Street.

We were a troop of cowards, ashen white and shaken, ready to run if a dog barked. The hot blood tingling in our veins, young strength, the desires of manhood, all the powers of nature cried out within us demanding life. Why should we die!

The elder empires died, and England's time was come. She should fall gloriously as became her life, still great, still mighty, before age sapped her strength, before decay rotted her honour. Nations born of her loins should pass her freedom on to distant ages, and teach their royal posterity of peoples the discipline and speech of the English race.

Our part was not in her death but in the living future—why should we die?

But Margaret led us on.

The sparrows fluttered about our horses' feet, a mist rose on the pavement, and above, the warm light glowed on the high pavilions, colonnades, and roofs crowning the cliff-like walls on either hand.

How empty the street was! Grave bronze statues looked down as we rode by, there were the sparrows fluttering, a cyclist was coming up behind, and an old woman venturing across our front, very much frightened at our trampling.

In an instant all was changed. A cluster of cars came whirling down from the north, killing the woman under their ruthless wheels, and as they passed, the occupants yelled and beckoned. The cyclist had come up abreast shouting to her Majesty some message from the Palace, but we could not listen.

A man came running out of Oxford Street, then three others and a score behind him, as a shell struck the ground in front of that first man. We saw him shrink away looking back, then fearing the shell less, try to jump clear of it. The shell burst flinging his body against a lamp-post, but the other men came on at the head of a roaring crowd blocking the thoroughfare from wall to wall. There were soldiers among them, their rifles thrown away, civilians mad with fright trampling down the weak, cars rocking from side to side as their wheels rolled over the fallen, police carried helpless in the flood. Fresh crowds poured out from byways on the right, and the main tide of panic came roaring down. We galloped into

line to beat the crowd back, yelled to the police to help us with barricades, but all these men were changed to beasts in their terror, shells burst in their midst, and the great rush swept us away.

We rallied about our Lady gradually, cut through the tide and reformed in Conduit Street. On our west lay the ruins of Mayfair, on our east the ruins of Soho, and between no human power could stem that cataract of headlong maniac flight. A shell burst on a roof above our heads scattering ruins of brick-work in our midst; so, sorely reduced and driven from our shelter, we kept together as best we might through street after street on fire, and alleys blocked with men.

The smoke hung like a canopy above, and ashes fell like snow through the red gloom. Poisonous vapours spread from bursting shells, low on the ground but rising inch by inch until with taut rein we held up our horses' heads, and swaths of people, strangled by that mist, perished around us. Our way was barred by falling masonry, by sheets of flame; then we were lost in the darkness all alone, and turning a corner found ourselves in the Mall.

So Russia dealt with our defenceless crowds, murdering in cold blood from the decks of her battle-ships. The Grand Duke Alexander was in command, and thus he came to pay his court to the Queen.

Slowly we rode along the avenue, thirty-eight left of us out of all the Guard. And having seen so many kinds of death, we were fastidious, not caring to fight our own poor countrymen, or to be any longer jostled through the streets, or butchered by the Russians without a blow returned. Our Lady

suggested that we should ride out to the southern lines, but we demurred, having an easy tolerance rather than respect for the French. Neither would she enter the Palace lest the sick and the wounded be disturbed in their beds. It was better to wait in the open. As to our horses we unsaddled the dear beasts for the last time, and because there was no need for them to die—since they had done no wrong—we turned them into the Green Park.

Our Lady sat upon the base of the Victoria Monument, and we, drawing away to a little distance, tried to be quiet lest we intrude upon her thoughts. But we could not help looking to see that she was safe, to behold her face, perhaps for the last time, or wonder if we might make her seat more comfortable. Then Lancaster whispered that she must be lonely, thinking herself deserted. So one by one with awkward pretences, we came about the balustrade where she sat, attempted to make conversation, to tell her stories, trying to win her laughter for the last time. They were such tame stories, fell so flat, and none of us could remember which she would like best. At last we made fat Branscombe sing—he had led the Palace choir.

> "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide,
> The darkness deepens, Lord with me abide,
> When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
> Help of the helpless, Lord abide with me.
>
> "Swift to its close, ebbs out life's little day,
> Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away——"

"Stop," cried our Lady, "I can't bear it, Branscombe!"

Then looking out through the red gloom of that unearthly day, we saw an immense crowd surging down the Mall. At first we thought the people were fugitives, but as they drew nearer, by their torches and weapons, the hags who led them and the song they screamed, " The Marseillaise," we knew them for outlaws and gaol-delivered felons.

Once more it had broken loose, that bloody and horrible beast mob of anarchy and chaos, but now with hands lifted against our Lady's life. Falling back upon the portico of the Palace, she sent a dozen men to barricade the alabaster stairs, and at all costs we must gain them time to do their work lest the Palace be sacked and thousands of our sick murdered in their beds. Her Majesty stood with her back against the fluted shaft of a column, bullets splashing all round her against the marble, while with an imperious gesture she demanded silence.

" Do you want to die ? " she cried to the thieves. " The Russians are slaughtering—they are coming here—they may come at any moment. Will you die with me ? "

The leaders of the mob drew back amazed, then thrust their spokesman forward, who touched his cap, asking quite respectfully for the treasure in the Palace lest it fall into the hands of the enemy.

" If there's anything left," cried Margaret, " you're welcome. My Guardsmen will bring whatever there is to you here, for I'd rather you shared it than my enemies—on one condition, that you stay here outside. I will not have my hospital disturbed."

" Who brought us to this pass ! " screamed a shrill hag. " Kill her ! Kill her ! "

"We're the people," shouted a man behind the hag. "We'll 'ave our rights!"

"You shall have your rights," said Branscombe, running him through the body.

Then beastly words were used, the man who first had spoken implored her Majesty to escape, lead spattered against the columns, and the mob charged.

Driven back step by step, we fought with clubbed carbines, covering her Majesty's retreat. The leaders were felled, the thieves behind them stumbling and pushed forward, went down under the heavy wave of that attack, which hurled us, whether we liked or no, into the Palace. We made a stand behind the main doors, a second stand behind the beginnings of a barricade; and there we opened fire for the first time. Nothing could live before that fusilade, yet the rush drove in through the open doors a writhing mass of frantic, shrieking men, hurled by the pressure of their fellows, screaming for mercy under the very muzzles of our guns. There could be no mercy.

We hardly knew what happened; supposedly some other gate was breached into the Palace, for suddenly a concentrated fire of rifles poured into us from behind. Looking up the stairs, we saw that the guardroom above us was full of rioters, firing down from the side galleries and the stairhead. To stay was to be butchered at the doors, and so we charged the stairs, cleaved our passage through the guardroom, and on the upper stairway, those who were left of us turned again to fight.

A clergyman led the next onrush of the mob, a poor, gaunt curate, unarmed, screaming like a woman.

"Rats—red rats," was his cry. "Away rats—know you not that I am Julius Caesar! Rats! red rats!"

He fell, poor madman, with so many of his fellows that the stairs ran blood, and our assailants, reeling before our fire, made barricades of the dead to fight from cover. Only when we had spent our last cartridge dared they charge again, led now by an old grey fanatic, waving a banner looted from some church, and screaming of Babylon and the Scarlet Woman. A bullet from his following gave him peace.

And then we had only our swords, our good straight swords, making a fence of steel about our Lady's life. Her life? It sounds a little inconsistent, but it was our turn first. We hoped for our Lady a nobler death, in a greater quarrel than this fight with thieves—that is, we ought to have so reasoned had there been time. It is only after the fight that one has leisure to invent all the good reasons. For the time we guarded her Majesty just because we loved her; fought for her, not with reasoning but with sheer hard steel.

The surgeons came with their long knives, and stood with us shoulder to shoulder for the defence of their wards; all sick and wounded men able to stand joined us with crutch or stick to fight for the Queen; the ladies, driven from their nursing, came to die with us, and many a Palace servant and stray civilian. So went the fight reeling along the corridor and into the rooms of state—a long, hard, desperate defence against overwhelming numbers. The horror of that battle was for the sick, thrown over in their

cots, the dying trampled under, the helpless nursing sisters, and those of us who fell.

Pretty things have been said about the Guard, but the word "Heroic" is strangely misapplied to us who thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We were having a good fight, free from all doubts and misgivings; for being to all intents and purposes already dead, we had nothing left to be alarmed about. But her Majesty, covering Trooper Browne when he was hurt, and engaging three assailants to her lone sword—that was heroic.

How that great stormy spirit rose in danger! She had never seemed to us so royal as when, wounded and bleeding, she rallied us in the throne room, looked about her laughing, and said she would not retreat another inch. She mounted the dais, sat in the chair of state, and laying the red sword across her knees, looked down at her enemies.

Tenuous wreaths of smoke hung midway up the columns, and blurred the golden vault. The mob was dispersed after pillage, save for a few maniacs still running on our swords. On every side the floor was covered with long rows of beds, the air was filled with wailing, screams and groans, and through the deep gloom one could see the stunted felons of the slums, cursing and shrieking as they fought over their plunder. Plate, robes, gems, porcelain, bronzes, the gifts of kings, and trophies of great campaigns, were fought for by the rabble, snatched from hand to hand, or shattered on the pavement. Drunk with wine from the cellars, mad with bloodshed, fighting among themselves, murdering at random, these obscene robbers forgot to attack

the Guard. We were dressing each other's wounds, rescuing women from outrage, contriving a barricade to shelter our refugees; and in her throne our Lady awaited the end.

We scarcely could see the further columns now, so dense the gloom, so heavy the rolling smoke. Far on our right down the east corridor, bright flames swept nearer and nearer, lighting the hall at last with a crimson glare, and like sunset clouds rolled the red smoke above.

So the end came. We heard a bugle call, clear notes soaring above all the tumult, sweet music for us who waited—the "Advance." We left our work on the barricading about the dais, clasped hands one with another, said "Good-bye." The Russian bugles called; one, then another, and a third far off. Her Majesty cried to her surgeons and able-bodied men to withdraw with the refugees, to hoist a white flag and stand aside from death under the shelter of the colonnades. We forced a swift obedience, we of the Guard.

And coming back we heard our Lady scream! She had half risen, one knee on the seat of the throne, her eyes dilated with horror, set on the east corridor. There under the flames, it seemed from the very midst of the flames, Miss Temple came, walking slowly, as though in a dream. She reached out her arms to us—her hands had been cut off at the wrists—her grey hair streamed with blood, her gown of black brocade was torn away at the breast. As she entered the throne-room the robbers fell shrinking back on either side, opening a lane through the beds to give her passage. Death was in her face, as

tenderly we led her to the Queen, and then at Margaret's feet she found rest. Her Majesty was crying.

Saluting the throne as we passed, we formed before the dais, measured each man his distance, and made ready. Lancaster, badly wounded and barely able to stand, planted the Guidon on our Lady's right, our lance-borne pennant charged with the royal arms, half seen through low-rolling flame-hued smoke, glowing with golden and scarlet blazonry.

Already the rioters in their thousands were being swept headlong as though by a whirlwind through the chambers of state, their flight converging in the throne-room, and, for one wild moment threatening to roll insensate over our last defence. Like a rock in mid torrent we split the rush in two, then free to breathe again wiped the blood from our swords and waited. Through the red gloom, we could see battalions of Russian seamen clearing a space with their bayonets on the further side of the hall. Opposite, an Admiral attended by his staff advanced midway to the throne and halted. On either side of this group of officers, the battalions, far back against the columns, halted, grounded arms with a crash, and unfixed bayonets. Their rifles clattered to the "ready," the "present," then with a deafening roar and a blaze of flame, delivered one volley. The floor was littered with the broken cots of the hospitals, with heaps of plunder, and with piles of the dead. We were alone with our enemy, and in a momentary silence heard the sharp crackle of advancing flames, felt the furnace heat, and saw the red glare deepen on drifting wreaths of smoke.

The bugles were sounding the English general

salute, and as the Admiral advanced at the head of his staff, we could do no less than respond to that courtesy with our swords. We looked at the Admiral's face, and he was the man we had expelled in disgrace from the Palace, his Imperial Highness the Grand Duke Alexander.

Our Lady never moved, nor would we draw aside one inch to give him passage. Dymoke was facing him on the right, Branscombe on the left, when at last he spoke to the Queen.

"Your Majesty," he said, "I have come to renew my suit, attended by half a million of your devoted admirers."

Our Lady never stirred.

"I might," he continued, "have expected a more courteous reception for the Emperor of All the Russias. Yes, my brother, Nicholas, is with the saints, and I am Father of the Russians. My heroic adversary, I have come to offer you the Russian throne in exchange for the British."

"Sir," said Margaret, "my kingdom is all red flame, my people are the dead, and I will not leave this throne. Of you I can ask nothing for myself, but for my Guardsmen here, and for some poor fugitives yonder—if you have not already murdered them, I ask life."

"Madam," cried Branscombe, "you ask too much! I speak for the whole Corps of the Guard!"

"Death!" cried Lancaster, and Browne called "Death!" and all the rest echoed "Death!" "Death!"

"Your Majesty," said Alexander, "I will provide for the refugees. To these gallant gentlemen I offer

commissions in my Imperial Guards ; to you, madam, the throne of my Empire and my devoted love."

Margaret looked down straight into his eyes. " You have a strange way, sir, in revealing your love. How many thousands, and hundreds of thousands of my people have you slaughtered this day in cold blood—my helpless citizens, women, little children, the sick in their beds, the wounded, the dying ! You drunken libertine, you pitiless coward, you butcher of women, I commend you to the Eternal, the Everlasting Justice. No liberal and justly governed realm was ever abandoned by Almighty God, and to Him I appeal now, to His ordeal of battle."

" At last," cried Dymoke, hoarsely, as drawing off his gauntlet, he struck the Russian Emperor in the face.

" Your Majesty ! " Alexander drew back, almost choked with rage. " I shall avenge this outrage ! "

" Avenge ! Avenge ! " cried Dymoke. " I am Hereditary Champion of England. Draw, I say, draw ! "

" I do not fight with servants. Stand back, sir ! "

" With servants, you cur ? My ancestors were Champions of England while yours gnawed horse bones round a camp fire. Draw ! "

" Harold Dymoke," said our Lady. " No man shall slight you as my Champion. I dub you knight, I give you the Duchy of Gloucester, I create you a Prince of the United Kingdom. Prince Harold of Gloucester, strike that man again ! "

Several Russian officers sprang forward attempting to save their master, who had scarcely time to draw, so swift, so furious the assault. Dymoke disarmed the first, ran the second through, and before he could disengage, was like to be killed when Branscombe intervened. Now fat Branscombe was instructor to the Guard, had once been the first swordsman in Europe, but even he was scarcely safe against six blades at once, and must have fallen, but that Hylton struck in vigorously. Dymoke was with the Emperor now.

The engagement was general and greatly to our liking—twenty-four Queen's Blackguards against fifty Russians. Our middle-aged opponents knew nothing of swordcraft, their tailor's swords buckled, they were laced up in full-dress uniforms. We cut their line of retreat, flicked the swords from their plump fingers, or, point to throat, forced them to surrender. What could they hope against our youth, our perfect training, our deadly skill at fence, our shirts of mail? We knew that their massed battalions dared not fire, the Emperor was dead, the General Staff was captured.

How can one trace a sequence through that wild confusion which followed? Even while we compelled our prisoners on pain of death to retire their battalions from the Palace, we saw the Russian seamen breaking ranks. The captured officers yelled at them in vain, we could gain nothing by killing our hostages, as the seamen rushed on us brandishing their rifles, hundreds to one against our scattered groups. No reach of sword could give us a fighting chance against such bludgeons as the

seamen used, nor had we time to rally round the Queen. Taken flank, front, and rear, each for himself, we measured our short blades against the sledge-hammer blows, and some of us won back to the steps of the dais—and some to the ranks of the Guard beyond the Gates of Death.

Comparing one with another the memories of that last tremendous struggle for existence, some of us have recalled a series of explosions which made the pavement reel beneath our feet, and more than one of the great onyx columns crash down in ruin on the attacking force. The timbering of the golden dome was all aflame above us littering red-hot wreckage through the smoke. It was a beam of this burning timber which slew Dymoke, and we heard him calling on Sydney before he died.

Some of us also have remembrance that with noble courtesy the disarmed officers of the General Staff were attempting to save us from their men. But, for the writer of this history, one recollection only is engraved forever upon a sorely bewildered brain. It is the picture of our Lady standing before her throne. All round her upon the steps of the dais, the swords of her Guardsmen whispered and sang, red gleaming blades, thrusting or slashing, resonant against dark steel of whistling rifles. Above her the emblazoned Guidon drooped in the coiling vapours, at her feet lay Lancaster, his dead face wonderful in its perfect rest. Her hands were on the hilt of her sword, the cloak was drawn about her, ruddy gold and red streamed her hair in the fierce light. Her face was lifted in prayer, radiant with an unearthly beauty, and fearless, and at peace.

And the fight raged on as though there never could be an end.

How strange the end was! One saw a Russian seaman, his bronzed face glowing with fury, his rifle whirling for the blow—then somehow that rifle was blown to pieces in mid-air; and the bandolier across the man's shoulder changed to a bolt of lightning; and his body dismembered, disrupted, gone. Then one looked out across the hall to find it empty, save for the group of Russian officers—while the floor seemed a sea of blood. A voice cried, "Margaret! Margaret!" We saw a single man, a great, grim, bloodstained man, looming gigantic in the flame-light, come running towards the dais, his arms stretched out; and in a reeling, heaving vault of blood and flame, John Brand lifting the Queen in his arms.

Margaret was saved!

XXIII

PRISONER OF LOVE

MARGARET stirred in her sleep, and with a tremulous sigh wakened. Her fingers touched cool, white linen, creased still where the folds had been, faintly scented from sprays of lavender. She saw one ray of sunlight level through soft gloom, and golden motes danced therein like fairies. Above swung rose-silk curtains swaying ever so gently to a ship's motion, and wonder dawned in her eyes.

Her armour was gone, her dripping sword, the air of flame, the sea of blood, the roar of battle—all gone like a bad dream. She reached out her right hand, and thrust it softly, quivering at the touch, against a man's rough hair.

The man was kneeling by the bed, his face buried in the white coverlet, his dark hair streaked with silver, and his great, strong arms stretched out as though to guard her even in her dreams. Of dull stained gold, was his rough shirt of mail, torn, ragged, bloody; then he lifted his head and she saw the grave majesty of his face. Again her hand went out groping until her uncertain fingers touched him—and he was real!

"The everlasting life," she whispered.

And he answered: "It is everlasting Love."

And then the passion leapt into his eyes. "Love me," he cried. "Love me! Love me, Margaret!"

She thrust the palm of her hand against his mouth.

"Afterwards—but this is the Earth, and so I've got to die. Oh save me, Brand," she cried. "I can't die, now! I can't die! How can I die now! And yet—must I not lead my people on the Other Side, ride with my Guard yonder?" Her head fell wearily, and her eyes closed. "It is all well—you were true to me."

He clutched her hand and kissed it passionately. "Margaret! Margaret! You shall not die!"

"The Palace rocks," she muttered, "like a ship. It was only a little wound, but my neck throbs, and with the daybreak—will it hurt much, Brand, will it be worse than a wound, this death?"

"Margaret, you live, England is saved! Don't you hear, Margaret, can't you understand, I have destroyed the Russian Fleet, I have swept away the armies, delivered London, crushed the League! Oh, love me a little, Margaret, just a little. I have waited so long, and fought so hard for love."

"Give me some wine—I can't understand all at once. Give me a little wine."

He brought a glass of wine, and she, sitting up in bed, made him share with her. The level sun rays shining on her face welcomed a delicate flush of her returning strength, and made her hair an aureole of glory. Then, looking full into the light—

"I never thought," said Margaret, reverently, "that I should see the sunset."

"It is the sunrise," he answered.

"The sunrise?"

"Yes."

"Where are we? Not in my Palace?"

"The Palace was burned yesterday. This is your Majesty's flagship, the *Coronation*," Brand crossed to the open port, and, looking out, "There is the Strait of Dover," he said, "and the sun has just risen, turning the North Sea into a field of silver. Above there are little clouds like petals of roses, and all round us the seagulls. Cannot you hear them, Margaret?"

"Where is the Siberian Fleet?"

"I have destroyed the Siberian Fleet. The Russian Emperor lay dead at your Majesty's feet, and the officers of his General Staff are prisoners in this ship. The Russian Army has surrendered."

"And the French Army, and the German?"

"Surrendered as prisoners of war. I have blown up all their magazines, their ammunition trains to the last cartridge. Their commanders-in-chief are prisoners on board the *Virgin*."

"And my people are saved!"

Brand came to the bedside, and there kneeling down, kissed our Lady's hand.

"Oh, love me," he whispered, "just a little!"

"And you are alive!" The blood raced in her veins, her heart was crying out for him. "I saw you in a little ship all alone, dying, I thought; and underneath there were rivers and lakes, and forests streaming by."

"You saw me, then?"

"In a dream, yes."

"Only love dreams like that. You love me, Margaret."

"I love my country, you were the one hope left, and I saw you dying. Tell me how you come to be alive."

"Rivers, and lakes, and forest," answered Brand. "You did not see the mountains, then? Great, big mountains came up against the west, higher and higher, alp piled on alp, precipice on precipice, mile on mile of ice barring the ship's way. They were the Alps of St. Elias. Oh, Margaret—say you love me before I go on."

"What did you do when the ship came to the mountains?"

"She was running right at them, a hundred miles an hour, I couldn't stir hand or foot, and I was being whirled helpless against an enormous cliff."

Margaret gripped his hand. "Yes! Go on!"

"Then you do love me? Only love grips like that."

"Don't I love all my brothers of the Guard? You wear the dress of my brothers. Please, go on."

"At the last instant something gave me strength —the thought that the Queen must be saved. I clutched at the levers, I got control of the ship, swung upwards grazing a hanging cornice of green ice, then turning in long circles slowly down, drove my ship into a pineclad slope, and, I think, fainted. When I came to again I was lying beside a camp fire under the shadow of the woods, and far aloft, right up in the full glory of the day, one great white mountain shone against the sky. Some dozen or so of men were sitting round the fire, and I heard

them in fierce argument. Several maintained that by my dress I must be an officer of her Majesty's Bodyguard, others by portraits they had seen in the newspapers, by my ship the *Experiment*, and by documents found with me, swore that I was Brand. Then one—a man dressed in deerskin, who seemed to have authority—said that he knew well I was one of the Queen's Blackguards. He knew all about it—had not the last mail brought a letter from his brother newly appointed to that very regiment?

"There was something familiar in the man's face, and presently when he came over to render me some small service, I said I knew his brother, Trooper Browne."

"How strange!"

"Such small coincidences have changed the history of the world. Mr. Browne told me that I had been lying in the camp for more than a week, delirious and raving of the Queen. He and his partners were mining rubies—they shall not lack rubies while I live. They were like women in their gentleness, and in their care I gained strength day by day until at last I was able to sit with them by the camp fire, to tell them of the Queen's desperate peril. I need not tell you they were loyal men—they were Canadians and burning to serve with me. Then the day came when I had strength to climb the hill path to where I had left my ship. The miners brought up provisions from the camp, and, crowded on board the *Experiment*, we sailed, fourteen men—not many for the conquest of the world."

"But with your terrible etheric power!"

Brand laughed. "The *Experiment* was not so very terrible. For armament we had three shot-guns, eight axes, a sword, and our pistols—that is until we raided a town and got some rifles. Our next necessity was a modern etheric ship able to ram, to defend herself, and to destroy explosives. We found the *Revenge* at Denver, in charge of state officials who had the audacity to deny my ownership. After a fight, we got possession, only to find ourselves in a steel prison with neither food nor water. The crew of the *Revenge* had been dispersed, her engines were disabled, we were attacked by federal troops, and on the fourth day when we were half dead with thirst and hunger, a battery of artillery opened fire. There were only eight of us left when we got the *Revenge* afloat. She was riddled with shell fire, her splintered sides gaping open, her cabins all in flames, and the shells were screaming past. She rolled till we thought she would turn over, the engines were rocking loose in their bed, she fluttered once as though she were foundering, and my men came about me waiting for the end. I told them of the old *Revenge*, and how Sir Richard Greville fought a great Spanish Fleet, his courage against their galleons—and how he died breathing the name of his Queen. Could we not fight the new *Revenge* for Margaret? They sang the National Anthem while I was testing for strains, and they stopped the singing to cheer when I said the *Revenge* would live.

"Denver will never forget the *Revenge*. I held the city to ransom. The officials must find me my own seamen and engineers, provisions, water, yes, and salute your Union Jack, or I swore I'd not leave

one man alive in their streets. They did not know I was helpless."

Margaret's eyes were growing moist as she listened, and when she turned away her head lest he should see her—

"Don't turn away," he cried, "I can hardly hear myself speak for this roaring sound in my ears. I've gone stark, staring mad with love, and I can't bear it if you turn away."

"You must not talk like that," said Margaret, and her white hand stole out within his reach. "Go on, sir," she added stiffly, and he went on.

"We found this ship, the *Coronation*, at Chicago, and the wreck of the *Revenge* fought a squadron of electric battleships before we captured our prize. With the *Coronation* I reduced Chicago to terms, then, manned and equipped, set out to find me a fleet. Ship after ship I found in the American cities, captured, manned, provisioned, and drilled them for war. I wonder I ever lived through that delay, knowing that the League had invaded England, that London was besieged, that any moment news might come—that I was too late." He pressed the back of her hand against his lips. "I had command of the air, and nineteen etheric ships of the line when at last I left America. At Lyonesse I embarked ten thousand men, advanced on London, and saw the Royal Standard still floating above the towers of the Palace. I destroyed the Siberian Fleet; didn't you hear the explosion of their battleships, my royal salute to the Flag? And then with a landing party I entered the Palace at last, groping through the smoke and the

darkness, trying to find the throne-room, wild with fright lest I should be too late. Oh, say that you love me, Margaret!"

"I am your prisoner," she answered, softly. "Prisoner of war."

"Prisoner of love," he cried.

"Prisoner of love," she looked into his eyes. "I was such a prisoner long, long ago. What else, do you think, kept me alive, save that I hoped you would come back again. Indeed, I do love you. Go, dear, or I shall cry."

So Brand was sent away knowing that he had conquered all the world, and that the world is the shadow of God, being made of love.

* * * * *

A chair of state was set in the saloon of the *Coronation*, a guard of honour drew up to receive her Majesty, then entered the masters and engineers of Brand's etheric fleet, the seven Canadian frontiersmen, and the seventeen men who remained of the Queen's Blackguards. Two of these, Trooper Hylton and Trooper Browne, being badly wounded, were borne in on stretchers. Then her Majesty entered, wearing the uniform of the Guard for the last time, and the American led her to her seat.

Brand presented his officers and the Canadians, and then our Lady spoke to us.

Officers of the Fleet, and you, gentlemen, from the Province of Yukon, and you, my dear brothers of the Guard—we have been down into the valley of the Shadow of Death, and we have come back to the living World, humbled by the pitiful compassion which has spared us. Our Empire was threatened

with dishonour, with enslavement and vassalage to Russia—and millions of our people have given their lives to save us from that shame. Millions have died to save our English freedom, and I speak for all our dead when I say that never while the earth endures shall our Liberty be threatened again. We are given the mastery of the air, and we will use that mastery to make sure that no earthly power shall ever rise up again against our freedom, or against our British peace. For you, whose valour has saved our fallen Empire, I bear such love and gratitude—oh, how can I find words of thankfulness! I am beggared of love, bankrupt in gratitude, because I never can pay my debts to you. My life shall be the proof that Margaret does not forget, but for the present I beg you hear me by deputy."

So the Queen ceased, and when much noise and waving of swords had ended, the Master, standing at her right hand began to read these words :—

> "Master Mariners of the Etheric Fleet, her Imperial Majesty has been pleased to grant to your ships, the white Ensign, and every honour becoming vessels of war. Your Commodore takes flag rank as Admiral of the Fleet. Commanding officers take rank as Captains, First Engineers as Fleet Engineers; and to your officers and seamen, is given their equivalent naval rank with pay and pension dating from the time of first entry on board an etheric ship, and arrears in full of all the pay which would have been earned in the Imperial Navy.
>
> "Admiral Watson is created a peer of the United Kingdom, and the Captains and Fleet Engineers will receive the honour of knighthood.

"To the gentlemen of the Yukon contingent: Her Majesty bestows upon Frederick Browne, a peerage, and creates the rest of you knights. Funds will be granted for the proper maintenance of these dignities.

"To the lords and gentlemen of the Guard: Those of you who engaged as servant orderlies, will receive the honour of knighthood and funds for the maintenance of your dignities. Those who engaged as troopers of the Guard, her Majesty desires to speak to you, stand forward!"

Out of two hundred gentlemen of the Guard, many were on detached service, but there stood forward: Sergeant Branscombe, Corporal du Plessis, Corporal de la Rey, Troopers Lord Ludford, Sir Marshall Poynte, George St. Leven, Patrick Burke, and Alexander Barrie; Trooper Browne and Trooper Hylton were wounded.

"My brothers," said our Lady, "beyond all accidents of rank and sorrow we have been so drawn one to another in perfect trust and faith, that I am sister to you rather than Queen. I thought once, that being made Queen I must give up everything that was dear to me, no longer be able to trust a friend, but always live separate, lonely and miserable. But when in my bitter need you were still loyal, and when my weakness leaned upon your strength, I learned that where love is there can be no solitude. So even in our last extremity, when we fought side by side, while we prayed for death, it was your love which kept my faith alive and gave me some poor courage. I was almost worthy at last to be your comrade—and we are comrades still."

Our Lady never knew how the words burnt. Ours was no brotherhood or comradeship, we were not creatures of wood or stone, passionless, but made of flesh and blood which did her worship, for we were men, and she a woman beyond any accident of rank or sorrow. So our great Sovereign Lady spoke to us, and we, with cast down eyes and shame in our hearts, made ready to do her obedience.

"I have no rewards to offer you, my brothers, you never worked for reward, and you would ask of me nothing but the glory of serving the Empire. You shall serve as my hands serve me, you shall be my hands bearing my whole authority each in your province, you shall be treated as I am treated, with every observance due to kings, you are created Viceroys, you are given power to use my signature, to execute my justice. You are each granted one or more of these etheric ships under your sole command. Each in your province, you will take such Lyonesse ships as you can find, man and equip them for purposes of state.

"Sergeant Branscombe, I make you Viceroy of Russia, to conquer the Russian Empire, capture the head of the Government and bring him prisoner to me, disarm all troops, destroy all vessels of war, blow up all arsenals and report to me.

"Corporal du Plessis, you have heard what I said to the Viceroy of Russia, I create you Viceroy of Germany. Capture the Emperor, disarm his Empire, and report to me.

"Corporal de la Rey, I create you Viceroy of France. Capture the President, disarm the Republic, and report to me.

" Trooper, Lord Ludford, I create you my Viceroy in the New World. Go to the President of the United States and, with all delicacy and courtesy, offer him our sympathy and help. With his consent, destroy the enemies of the Republic, and deliver their leaders to him as prisoners of war. Send help to the Viceroy of Canada.

" Trooper, Sir Marshall Poynte, I create you Viceroy of the Mediterranean States. Destroy all hostile armaments and restore the British peace.

" Trooper St. Leven, I create you Viceroy of Delhi. You will find India in flames from end to end, and our Government in desperate need. Crush down all insurrection, punish the rebels and mutineers, and where mercy would seem like weakness, make our justice terrible enough to ensure against any fear for our people. You will find Prince Ali of Haidar reigning at Delhi. Hang him and make proclamation that he is punished as a Russian spy. The Russian invasion you will turn back. You will in all else obey the orders of the Viceroy of India.

" Trooper Burke, I create you Viceroy of the China Seas. Destroy all hostile armaments, and restore peace throughout your jurisdiction.

" Trooper Barrie, I create you Viceroy of Africa. Subdue all forces hostile to our Empire, annexing their territories, and restoring our peace.

" Trooper Browne and Trooper Hylton, you are both created to the rank of Viceroy, and will be commissioned as soon as your wounds are healed.

" Viceroys of the Guard, I believe in my heart that this was long ago foretold, this war of all the

nations—is it not the Armageddon? And afterwards it is written, that the devil shall be chained up for a thousand years. 'There shall be no more war.' What if it be true? Peace for a thousand years, the Millennium—the reign of Christ! Did you ever notice that our flag—see, hanging here above our heads—the Union Jack—does it not bear three crosses? On Calvary there stood three crosses. You will carry this flag, my brothers, and it shall fly over all lands and seas throughout the world—the holy symbol of the last Crusade, and the founding of the New Jerusalem. It was to be no city built by human hands, but fallen from Heaven—the Planet. The length and the breadth, and the height of it are equal, for it is the round world. There shall be no night there, for the sun shines from everlasting to everlasting. This Earth is a city eternal in the heavens where the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. My knights, I send you out upon this quest to bring peace to the whole earth. Avenge justice, but be merciful, and in wielding your power be very humble. For every act of yours, my people will hold me responsible, for every mistake I shall be judged. Do not let me be brought to judgment for any ruthless abuse of power, or any act of unchristian vengeance. I have placed my honour in your keeping.

"And when you have restored peace, your power ends, you come back to be citizens of the Empire, obedient as I am to the laws and customs of my people. I am only Queen by their election, not by any authority of my own. In this time of weakness and peril it was my duty to rule, to see that policy was marred by no divided counsels, to stand at the

brunt of danger. So soon as there is peace and safety, I shall deliver back my sovereignty into the hands of those who gave it to me, to the great, free Electorate, my masters, my judges, my kings whom I serve. If they are pleased with me I am still Queen, but not of my own right, only in their love. The only throne of Britain is in the hearts of the British, the only sceptre is the defence of Liberty.

"These are the terms of your service—and so, my dear brothers, I commend you to God's keeping."

When she had said that, our Lady rose from the throne and her face became radiant with a new loveliness and glory such as we had never dreamed of. She had forgotten us, her servants, and men-at-arms, and with a great royal gesture, reached out her right hand to Brand, Master of Lyonesse. She never said a word, but stood looking down upon him, as kneeling, he took her hand in his, and pressed his lips to her fingers with a reverent kiss.

EPILOGUE

LONDON, 18th June, 2045

HER Imperial Majesty has been graciously pleased to sanction the publication of this work, and to me is entrusted the preparing of a brief epilogue.

I am the Trooper Hylton mentioned in the closing chapter, and first knew the author in those far-away times sixty-five years ago—when we were cadets together at the school of arms. I remember Browne as a shy, awkward, dreamy lad, remarkable for his stature—he stood six foot four—with rapidly maturing, already gigantic strength, and a physical perfection marred by the almost grotesque uncouthness of his face.

A swordsman, second perhaps only to Branscombe, a horseman not rivalled in his time, Browne's career was marred by hopeless failure in scholarship.

The "big boy," as he describes himself, was, on the surface, cold and distant, yet desperately eager to win friendship; but there again his life was marred by that shyness which seemed like icy reserve repelling the kindly approaches of men who cared to know him. Behind that barrier he suffered.

So he came to the Palace bringing with him the very atmosphere of arctic Canada, great, lonely, remote, uncomely, savage. Because of his training

as a cowboy, the silence, the solitude of his early life, he lacked the faculty of easy speech, but he had the deepest, grandest qualities of manhood. And at the moment he joined her Majesty's Bodyguard he made his first friendship with no less a man than Sydney, the Magnificent. The two were friends inseparable, and thus in this book we have our first real insight into the events which led to the Terror.

It is supposed that before the great Marquess went to meet his death, he commended Browne to her Majesty's special care. The whole corps of the Guard was indignant at the promotion of this young recruit to the securing of our Lady's safety during the night watches, but the Canadian giant justified even that unusual honour. No less than four times he saved the Queen's life, either from the attacks of assassins, or in actual battle. In the fight on the alabaster stairs, there is no doubt that his incomparable strength, address and valour rescued, not only her Majesty, but her whole escort from massacre, and his lone charge which cleared the upper stairway for our retreat, will go down to history as one of the mightiest deeds in human annals.

His book ends with the creation of the Viceroys of the Guard, and her Majesty's betrothal to Lyonesse; and there is no mention of that winter day when all the presidents and sovereign rulers of the world assembled in St. George's Chapel at Windsor. Browne was then sufficiently recovered from his wounds to attend the solemn service of the Eucharist. He was then a Viceroy of the Guard, and Marquess of Yukon, had been invested with the Garter and in

response to a petition of Parliament, granted the Victoria Cross for valour.

But her Imperial Majesty never set any limits to her gratitude towards those who have served her well, and for this Canadian hero she reserved even greater honours. In the celebration of the Eucharist, Brand knelt at her right hand, the Marquess of Yukon on her left, and he was made to stand beside her to receive the surrendered swords of her triumphant Viceroys, all of which, with his own, he laid down before the altar. The emperors, kings, presidents, and reigning sovereigns then one by one broke their swords, and laid the fragments upon the altar, just at the foot of the cross.

At the last came Margaret, attended by Brand, and by Yukon. Kneeling before the table, she made humble presentation of an unbroken sword, then rising, confronted the assembled sovereigns.

"In token," she said, "that I desire unbroken peace, I have dedicated this unbroken sword to the solemn service of the King of kings. In token that the nations need have no fear, I sheathe the sword for ever; and give the sacred trust to this, my servant, Viceroy of the Air."

The giant, kneeling at her feet, received the sheathed sword of the Millennial Peace.

"And I do now deliver into his keeping the Etheric Fleet, charging him never to shed human blood, except at the command of the Great Council of Nations to vindicate the Divine Justice upon any people who shall lift rebellious hands against mankind."

For twenty years this first of the Viceroys of

the Air remained in custody of the sheathed sword, a lonely man, and a silent, greatly loved, and greatly suffering.

His wounds, which in one of lesser strength must have proved mortal, bred in his shattered body malignant growths, of which, aged and weary, he died in his forty-fifth year. To Branscombe he passed on the Trust of the Sword; and it was in the bed from which he never afterwards rose that he wrote his book, "The Chariot of the Sun," telling the story of his hopeless and unspoken love for the woman he had so valiantly served.

After his death, in the year 2005, the manuscript was found under seal, addressed to her Majesty, and has not been published until the passions of that time were stilled, and the Terror remains only as a memory seen through the mists of sixty-five fruitful years.

Last winter, our august and venerable sovereign caused the work to be read aloud to her children and grandchildren, and it is on the plea of the young princes that the story is now given to publication. To the people of the golden age it will seem a very quaint, funny old document, which is concerned with such obsolete virtues as unselfish love, faith, honour, and manliness.

HYLTON,
Viceroy of the Air.

THE END

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